

THE TESTAMENT OF SHEIKH ABDULLAH

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With a Monograph by
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PUBLISHER'S PREFACE

"We will bind you in chains of gold !" Thus spoke Jawaharlal Nehru to Sheikh Abdullah during a discussion which eventually led to the "Delhi Agreement" and to the formulation of Article 370 of the Constitution of India, which was to govern the special relationship of the state of Jammu and Kashmir with the Republic of India. How did those chains of gold come to be replaced by iron shackles on the wrists of the *Sher-e-Kashmir* not so long afterwards ? What sort of man was this Lion of Kashmir to have merited this treatment ?

For most Indians Sheikh Abdullah has remained an enigmatic figure, even though his name has frequently hit the headlines and he himself has flitted on and off India's political scene during the past twentyfive years and more. In all those years he has been variously depicted : as a charismatic leader of Kashmiris; an ardent nationalist and a friend and close confidant of the late Pandit Nehru; as a British agent or a pro-Pakistani intriguer, safest held in jail; and, more recently, as one who might, after all, have a role to play on the all-India political scene.

The Sheikh himself has done little to dispel the confusion created in our minds regarding his true personality. A rugged individualist, he has always spoken his mind freely—but others cannot always attune themselves to his seemingly contradictory attitudes and statements.

For example, after a near-total victory of his nominees in the civic polls held in Kashmir in September 1972, Sheikh Abdullah addressed a public meeting in Srinagar on 17 September.

The Times of India reported the Sheikh's statement the next day under a two-column headline which read :

NO CONFRONTATION SAYS SHEIKH

while *The Indian Express*, which has sometimes boldly taken up the cudgels on his behalf, surprisingly enough published a report of the same meeting—also under a two-column headline, which read :

SHEIKH TALKS OF CONFRONTATION

This is a typical example of the kind of confusion that has always surrounded this paradoxical figure. It is to try and dispel some of the doubts and contradictions that this book was conceived.

Sheikh Abdullah stepped out of an aircraft at Palam airport in New Delhi on 8 May, 1965, and was arrested forthwith and taken to Ootacamund. He was brought back to Delhi for medical treatment; then followed a long-drawn out spell of house arrest at no. 3, Kotla Lane. Finally, all restrictions on his personal liberties were withdrawn on 28 January, 1968, after two years and six months.

He addressed a press conference the very next day, at which was present a representative of the *Shabistan Urdu Digest*, an Indian language publication. This young reporter made bold to contact the Sheikh's secretary after the press conference and asked to be given an exclusive interview. This was readily granted and, four days later, he found himself chatting pleasantly to the Lion of Kashmir in the same bungalow in Kotla where the Sheikh had spent the best part of two years under house arrest.

Since the *Shabistan Digest's* correspondent had no idea as to how much time Sheikh Abdullah was likely to allow him, he began with a series of questions out of a list of over eighty that he had hopefully drafted before the interview. Sheikh Sahib must have been quite taken by his young interviewer (obviously one of his many admirers) and on and on went the first morning's interview. As it turned out, Sheikh Abdullah talked to this press correspondent for the best part of 18 hours, with adjournments, between 6 and 14 January.

If the correspondent had had any idea that the Sheikh would have been likely to be so indulgent with him, he might have sorted out the questions so that they covered the Sheikh's life and his political struggles in chronological order. Instead, the original publication in Urdu, which is a record of the longest interview the Sheikh had ever accorded to any newspaper or journal, covered the Sheikh's personal and public life in repeating cycles—the questioner going back again and again to points previously covered but which could be expanded as the interview continued over the days. We have therefore re-organised the original translation as best as possible, so that the Sheikh's life is depicted as far as possible in actual sequence—his childhood, the birth of the Muslim Conference in Kashmir, his Prime Ministership, his dismissal and arrest in 1953 and the subsequent trial, his release and reconciliation with Nehru in 1964, his visit to Pakistan to meet President Ayub, *Haj* pilgrimage and his meeting with Chou En-lai in Algiers and, finally, his arrest once again on his return to India in 1965.

However, there are gaps in the story portrayed in the answers to the questions put to the Sheikh. Although the Sheikh had in effect laid down his "Testament" before the interviewer, the gaps had to be filled if the reader was to be given an objective account of the Sheikh and his aspirations and achievements.

We searched the wide horizon for someone to write a commentary on the "Testament", to fill in the gaps in the story and to bring it up to date. Critics of the Sheikh could be found by the dozen : our quest was for a friend of Sheikh Sahib, yet someone whose views could not be regarded as biased or "suspect".

The Sheikh's most active and vociferous champion during all these difficult years has been Mridula Sarabhai. A devout disciple of Mahatma Gandhi, jailed for months on end (though never charged with any known crime in a court of law) she has been the Sheikh's steadfast friend and supporter to such an extent that she became completely *persona non grata* in official circles—though Jawaharlal Nehru never lost his personal regard for this unbelievably courageous woman. Be that as it may,

she was not the person to write a commentary on the Sheikh's "Testament" for us—as she herself asserted.

In October-November 1971 three articles appeared in *The Indian Express** which served to challenge the very basis of the charges always levelled against Sheikh Abdullah. Prem Nath Bazaz, who wrote the first two was a well known scholar of Kashmiri affairs, but was himself a Kashmiri. Mr. Gundevia, who wrote the other, had been a Government official (Indian Civil Service) and had been Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs. Did Sheikh Abdullah really have a "friend at Court" other than his one-time master-patron Jawaharlal Nehru ?

When shown our translation of the *Shabistan Urdu Digest* interview, Mr. Gundevia (who had retired from service some years previously) readily agreed to write a commentary for our book. As he put it, he felt it was a "bounden duty not only to defend Sheikh Abdullah but to clear Prime Minister Nehru" from certain allegations that statements and articles by irresponsible persons had pointed at him after his death. The commentary finally grew so large and was so comprehensive that we decided to call it a "Monograph".

At the time of the independence of India, Mr. Gundevia had been in Burma. Returning to New Delhi in 1948, he was appointed a Joint Secretary in the then Commonwealth Relations Department where one of his responsibilities was to see legislation through on the subject of the recovery of abducted women, a most controversial issue, no doubt. The legislation was floated in Parliament by Shri Gopalaswami Iyengar, Pandit Nehru's Minister without portfolio. Mr. Gundevia was working behind the scenes with Mridula Sarabhai, who had been described to him as "the most dangerous woman between India and Pakistan!" Mr. Gundevia left New Delhi in September 1950, on posting to Moscow and later to other places on foreign assignments, and was away for ten years. He returned to Delhi in 1960 as Special Secretary, handling Kashmir Affairs in the United Nations, then became Commonwealth Secretary,

*Two articles entitled "New Light on Kashmir" by Prem Nath Bazaz (October 28 and 29) and one by Y.D. Gundevia entitled "Is There Any Light in Kashmir ?" (November 22) both in *The Indian Express*.

still handling Kashmir Affairs, and ended up as Pandit Nehru's Foreign Secretary. Sheikh Abdullah had been in jail for seven years when Mr. Gundevia returned to India in 1960.

As will be seen from the Monograph Mr. Gundevia has written for us, Kashmir was the topic at the breakfast table in the Prime Minister's house in New Delhi on the Friday of Jawaharlal Nehru's last press conference, on 22 May. The Prime Minister died on 27 May, 1964.

We could not have got a more qualified person to "defend" Sheikh Abdullah—and also to speak for the late Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru on this subject. The verdict is that if Pandit Nehru let his friend Sheikh Abdullah linger in jail, it could only be to give him a chance to clear himself. And, Gandhian idealist and deeply religious man that Sheikh Abdullah is, he never held this against his friend—and even less so against his daughter, Indira Gandhi.

Recent developments have once again focussed attention on Sheikh Abdullah. The demonstrations against renaming the government women's college after Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, followed shortly afterwards by state-wide disturbances (November 1973) which, significantly, coincided with Prime Minister Bhutto's first ever visit to Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, appeared to be directed against Sheikh Abdullah as much as against India, presumably in an effort to get him to change his present mood of accommodation regarding the leadership in New Delhi.

Secondly, the Chief Minister, Mr. Mir Qasim, has been giving the impression of late that though he claims to have beaten the Plebiscite Front he is being indulgent towards the Sheikh—if not giving in to him altogether. Some even claim that the Sheikh has been permitted to take a hand in the day-to-day running of the administration. All this has, quite naturally, given rise to criticism of the Chief Minister and to a marked feeling of pessimism among his colleagues.

At the same time, it is being openly stated that it is New Delhi that is behind the move to create a new image for the Sheikh. Mrs. Gandhi's overt invitation for a dialogue with Mirza Afzal Beg (of the Plebiscite Front) together with her

attempt at rapprochement with Sheikh Abdullah, accompanied by a degree of mutual back-slapping, have been welcomed in some quarters while viewed with suspicions in others.

Sheikh Abdullah's own statements continue to be as enigmatic as ever. There are those who interpret them as a desire to return to power in the state and look upon his dealings with Mr. Mir Qasim as the prelude to a working arrangement within Kashmir state. There are yet others who prefer to think that the real future role for the Sheikh is being created in New Delhi rather than in Srinagar, notwithstanding the Sheikh's own pronouncements and aspirations in the matter : the reason, they say, is that though Delhi has welcomed the recent change in his political thinking, it is unwilling to let him take over in Srinagar because that would mean the virtual eclipse of the state Congress.

So, in jail or out of it, the Sheikh continues to be at the centre of controversy and speculation : and this will probably be so whether he remains a private citizen, becomes the Chief Minister or joins in New Delhi as a Cabinet colleague of Mrs. Gandhi. It is in the make up of the man to be controversial, utterly honest, non-conformist—a truly enigmatic figure.

It is for these reasons that the Publishers hope that the present volume will, in some measure, be of help to those who are seeking to understand what this great figure stands for and what are his political objectives. For here the Sheikh speaks for himself and lays down, in effect, his "Testament"—for the first time.

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SHEIKH ABDULLAH SPEAKS

On the morning of January 2, 1968, Mr. B. N. Tandon, the Deputy Commissioner of Delhi, arrived at 3 Kotla Lane, New Delhi, to present Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah his "orders of freedom" releasing him from the latest of a long series of imprisonments and detentions. This one had commenced on 8 May, 1965, when Sheikh Abdullah, his wife Begum Abdullah, and their friend, Mirza Afzal Baig, returned to India, landing at Palam Airport in New Delhi, after a visit abroad that ended with a pilgrimage to Mecca, but included his now famous meeting with Mr. Chou En-lai in Algeria. They had been arrested under the Defence of India Rules. Sheikh Abdullah was sent to Madras early that morning and later was settled in Ootacamund and Kodaikanal until his ill health necessitated his return to Delhi for treatment. The remainder of his detention was then spent in Delhi in the company of his wife who, while not under arrest, was served with notice after her husband's arrest that she was not to re-enter

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Kashmir. When, at the end of 1966, those restrictions were removed, she visited Kashmir for some time ; but upon Sheikh Abdullah's return to Delhi, she joined him at Kotla Lane.

Sheikh Abdullah's detention lasted two years, nine months and twenty-four days and imposed the very restrictions most arduous for him : silence and solitude. The barbed wire and armed police guard were tolerable but the forced separation from his followers and the inability to speak his mind on political and international events were more difficult to bear. Immediately after his release, Sheikh Abdullah took every available opportunity to publicise his views, present his arguments, meet national leaders and mix with friends and supporters.

The day of his release was the Muslim festival of *Id* and Sheikh Abdullah's first public appearance was at *Idgah* where he offered his *Id* prayers. Thousands of Muslims had gathered for the religious occasion but as news of the Sheikh's freedom spread, more and more people came to the *Idgah* and Sheikh Abdullah was happy to be able to address them.

I was among those people and as I stood there, I thought about the past few years of Sheikh Abdullah's personal and political history, glad to be able to remember so much of that past and grateful to be witnessing this emotion-packed appearance of so charismatic and enigmatic a figure.

This is how the Sheikh addressed the gathering :

My Friends ! *Id* Mubarak ! I greet you affectionately !

Even after fourteen years of jail life, my ideas have not changed. The basis of all tension in the relations between India and Pakistan is the Kashmir problem. Both countries must learn to live as good neighbours. It is time they realized that steady progress depends on their friendly relations.

I have made some commitments to the people of Kashmir and I shall fulfil those commitments at the cost of my life. In settling the Kashmir dispute, I shall never bargain with the honour and dignity of either country.

I remember vividly what Mahatma Gandhi did for Hindu-Muslim unity. I shall continue my efforts in this direction. I appeal to the six crores of Indian Muslims to live an orderly and organized life and to promote communal harmony. No other interest is dearer to me than the safety and welfare of the minorities of India and Pakistan.

To Muslims my advice is : do not hesitate to speak and live by the truth. Have no fears and do not be depressed by adversity. Have an eye on the future and do not feel ashamed that the country has been carved in two and Pakistan has been created. Pakistan was created only with the consent of the people's representatives.

India, Pakistan and Kashmir should sit together to solve the Kashmir problem because it can never be solved by resorting to war. If Pakistan ever thought it could destroy India by war, it has surely given up such ideas now. Similarly, if India thinks it can annihilate Pakistan, it is equally foolish. The results of war are so obvious and fresh in our minds.

I am addressing you as a free man after years of detention. Since all restrictions have been removed from me, I can appeal to my brothers to work hard for the prosperity of their own country. They should love India as their motherland, as they have been born and brought up here. Let us hope that there will never again be war between India and Pakistan for it will be disastrous for the minorities of both countries.

The excited crowd responded to Sheikh Abdullah's rousing words with cries of "Long Live Sheikh Abdullah" and I must admit I too was caught up in the emotion of his appeal.

From the *Idgah*, Sheikh Abdullah went to call on President Zakir Hussain, offering narcissus flowers with the reminder that, "In Kashmir we compare these flowers to the eyes of our beloved. Now the eyes of the Kashmir public are upon you." It was a subtle appeal for the support of Dr. Hussain in finding a solution to the Kashmir problem.

Sheikh Abdullah also paid visits bearing *Id* greetings and news of his release to the ambassadors of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Republic, Turkey and Iraq. The Pakistan High Commissioner later called on Sheikh Abdullah at his home, along with the Kashmiri members of Parliament and Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed.

His public appearance in the morning, his visits to the President of India and representatives of the Arab nations and his many callers seemed to underscore, to those of us who were watching, that Sheikh Abdullah intended to come back into the public limelight immediately and with unmistakable determination to pursue his crusade for justice in Kashmir.

That evening, in a limited press interview, Sheikh Abdullah restated his general objectives and positions as I strained to record rapidly the salient points.

Q. What are your immediate plans, Sir ?

A. I shall pick up the threads of my efforts to bring about amity between India and Pakistan from the point where I left it in 1964, after Pandit Nehru's death. Since the problem of Kashmir is a matter of life and death for Kashmiris, I expect that both India and Pakistan will try to move closer together.

Q. What would your attitude be towards Ghulam Mohammed Sadiq and Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed ?

A. It has been proved that the policies of these men have been harmful to Kashmir. Now it rests with them to correct their ways. I have nothing to do with the Sadiq Government as it does not represent the Kashmiri masses. It is in office because the Indian government wants it to remain in office. I shall discuss the matter with the Indian government later.

Q. Would you be able to fulfil your mission in view of the bitterness that has developed during your long years of imprisonment ?

A. The personal privations that I have undergone have not left me with any bitterness. It is not a question of personal sacrifices, it is a question of the aspirations of the Kashmiri people.

Q. What long-range plans have you made ?

A. I have not really made any plans for the future.

Q. Can you tell us exactly what you want to achieve ?

A. I want peace in the Indian sub-continent.

Q. Have you planned another visit to Pakistan ?

A. No, not as yet.

So far, I had noticed nothing inflammatory in any of the Sheikh's public statements—if anything, his utterances were almost bland—and on 3 January the same conciliatory spirit continued when he made a brief speech at a dinner, in which he said :

Islam teaches forbearance and the forbearance of Muslims is known throughout the world. However, this quality is less evident among Muslims nowadays. The Indian Muslims should reconcile their differences with the other communities in India.

The government of Kashmir issued a mild statement that day, reacting to the release of Sheikh Abdullah from confinement :

The government of Kashmir has kept its mind open about Sheikh Abdullah. He will have full freedom of movement and the government has no desire to interfere with his legitimate and legal rights.

The next day, 4 January, 1968, at his first major press conference he finally focussed attention on some of the details of the Kashmir problem as he saw it and discussed with us his own role in the matter.

At eleven o'clock in the morning about 250 of us, Indian and foreign newspaper and magazine reporters, with an assortment of photographers and television cameramen, gathered on the lawn of the Sheikh's residence. The Sheikh, seated in the centre of the lawn on a garden chair and flanked by his close associates, Mirza Afzal Baig and Mr. J.J. Singh, had earlier distributed a prepared statement to the reporters in which he had emphasised that he would try to promote and strengthen the Tashkent spirit among India, Pakistan and Kashmir. In a reference to Mahatma Gandhi, he said that no more fitting service could be rendered to his memory than the implementation of the Tashkent agreement. Specifically he had said :

If there is any significance to my release then all political prisoners should be released immediately. All such laws that interfere with human freedom and freedom of expression should be abrogated at once. As long as I am alive I shall continue to work for amity between India and Pakistan and for equality and friendship between the various communities and religions.

I think all of us were in high gear as the conference got going but there were a few false starts. One pressman began by reading a lengthy dissertation of his own before making his point whereupon Sheikh Abdullah interrupted to say to the reporters :

This gentleman wants a clarification from me as to whether I am a British agent or an American or Chinese spy... I am just pondering my position !

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Then another reporter asked : "Are you an Indian citizen ?" to which the Sheikh replied : "It is a meaningless question. Whether I am an Indian citizen or a strange creature from the sky is an irrelevant matter. You ought to be concerned with what I stand for." And to find out what Sheikh Abdullah stands for, the press conference started in earnest.

Q. Have you any ready solutions for the Kashmir problem ?

A. I have no ready formula, nor have I planned a programme so far. I shall be meeting the Prime Minister this evening and much will depend upon her attitudes. I am confident that she has full knowledge of her father's views on the matter.

Q. Did your meetings with President Ayub Khan in 1964 have any bearing on the Indo-Pak conflict in 1965 ? Did not that war close for ever the initiatives taken by Pandit Nehru ?

A. After the war in 1965, the need for peaceful relations between the two countries is all the more important.

Q. Sir, you had expressed your gratitude to Sri Rajagopalachari and Sri Jai Prakash Narain. Are we to assume from that that you are in agreement with their view that the solution of the Kashmir problem should be thrashed out between Delhi and Srinagar and not between Srinagar and Rawalpindi ?

A. As far as I have understood these two great leaders, they maintain that for any solution the people of Kashmir need to be satisfied. Therefore whatever formula is evolved for solving the Kashmir problem, it will not affect the secular character of India nor the prestige or dignity of Pakistan. Pandit Nehru and I were in agreement that a solution of the Kashmir question should be such that it could be placed before our own people without giving rise to fresh hurdles or compromising in any way the ideal of secularism in India.

Q. You had stated that for the fulfilment of your mission you had intended to work in India, Pakistan and Kashmir. Does that imply that you consider these three as separate entities ?

A. It is not a question of separate entities. No doubt India and Pakistan are two independent countries but it is no

less true that the Kashmir problem concerns three parties. The state of Kashmir has been under dispute since 1947 and it cannot be denied that the Kashmir problem is the fundamental dispute between India and Pakistan.

Q. How do you propose to solve this problem ?

A. There are only two methods of settling a dispute. One is to decide the matter by the use of force, which has already been tried twice. The other is a peaceful method and in this the essential point is that both parties should be ready to accommodate each other. Each should respect the wishes and sentiments of the other.

Q. What are your views about India and Pakistan ?

A. My views are well known. If it would help I would go to Pakistan immediately ; but this would not solve the problem. In spite of the personal inconveniences that I have suffered, I have no hatred towards India. However much hatred you may have for me, I honestly hope that India will not only prosper but begin to play its proper role in the international field. It hurts me to realize that the India of our dreams has not yet emerged.

Q. Are you still insisting on self-determination for the people of Kashmir ?

A. The right of self-determination is an inherent right of all peoples and no one can snatch it away. If we are free citizens then we have inherited this right automatically. But the more important thing is : under what formula should the Kashmiris be allowed to exercise this right so that the Kashmiri masses are satisfied ? So-called "free elections" to decide the issue will not satisfy me.

Q. Sir, you are meeting with the Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, this evening. What would your reaction be if you were invited to join the Cabinet ?

A. (Above the laughter that rolled through the audience) I shall certainly accept this offer if it leads to any solution of the Kashmir problem.

Q. A reference in President Ayub Khan's recent autobiography, *Friends Not Masters*, makes it appear that your meeting with him left him with the impression that the future

of Kashmir was linked only with Pakistan. How far can this assumption be correct ?

A. (This time his own laughter prefaced his remarks) I have not read this book. I have read only extracts in Indian newspapers. Some of those statements are incorrect. I am not bound by President Ayub's views of things and I have no connection with those views. But would you expect President Ayub to write in his book that I told him that I had permanently aligned myself with India ?

Q. Can you tell us the circumstances of your previous arrest ?

A. I do not want to enter into the unpleasant controversies of the past. What has always attracted me to India is the fact that it is the biggest democracy in the world. It so happened that during my Prime Ministership of Kashmir, when I had the full backing of the Kashmir Assembly, I was suddenly arrested. I represented to the President of India and the Prime Minister of India that I should be permitted to defend my own case. My representation had no effect. Now, would you say that my right of self-determination was upheld or respected in a democracy ? I do not doubt anybody's intentions ; it is possible that my way of thinking may be wrong and Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed's or Mr. Sadiq's may be correct. But both of them have had ample opportunity to prove themselves in the administration. Let us consider carefully whose methods have been more beneficial for the Kashmiris. These two leaders are under an illusion that they have settled the question of Kashmir once and for all. However, the results of their efforts and their administration are open for all to see.

Q. Do you think that it would be possible for President Ayub Khan to present to the people of Pakistan a solution to the Kashmir problem which would also be acceptable to the people of India ?

A. If the world accepts it as a just solution then the President of Pakistan should accept it. In my view President Ayub sincerely wants friendly relations with India. You may or may not agree with me but I honestly believe that if a solution to the Kashmir problem is framed in the right spirit, it would be acceptable to President Ayub.

Q. What was the purpose of your meeting with Chinese Premier Chou En-lai in Algeria ?

A. I wanted to know his views about the area around Gilgit which Pakistan has transferred to Chinese control. I passed on a full report of my talks with Chou En-lai through the Indian Ambassador in Algeria to the Ministry of External Affairs. I do not know of any section in the Indian Penal Code which bars a person from meeting another person.

And with that, the press conference was suddenly over.

It was nearing one o'clock in the afternoon and we newsmongers had covered a lot of territory on the Sheikh's views but I for one was not fully satisfied and decided somewhat audaciously to approach the Sheikh's son-in-law, who serves as his secretary, with a request for an additional interview. The Sheikh's son-in-law, Mr. Shah, led me to Sheikh Abdullah at once and an interview was granted for January 6, 1968, at 8.10 in the morning.

For the next two days I kept a fairly close track on Sheikh Abdullah's public appearances and speeches partly to help fill in gaps that still existed in my understanding of him and partly to help me frame questions for my own interview with him.

On the evening of January 4, Sheikh Abdullah met Mrs. Indira Gandhi for one hour during which, he said later, he had succinctly presented his views on the Kashmir problem. That evening he told some reporters, "I shall meet the Prime Minister again but as yet no date has been fixed for the second meeting. This discussion was cordial but, of course, the old problem of Kashmir cannot possibly be solved in one brief sitting."

For her part, Mrs. Gandhi, on January 5, held a press conference in which she referred to Sheikh Abdullah's release and her talks with him, stating that the policy of India in the matter of Kashmir remained unchanged though minor alterations could be possible in the background of that policy. She also answered some of our questions.

Q. Would you agree to a meeting with President Ayub Khan ?

Mrs. G. I am not ruling out the possibility of a conference with President Ayub but before such a meeting could be possible and fruitful, a great deal of ground-work has to be done. If at a later date I feel sure that a meeting with the President of Pakistan could be useful I would gladly take the initiative in calling for one.

Q. The Jan Sangh leader, Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee, has suggested that you have had secret correspondence with Sheikh Abdullah. Can you tell us if that is so ?

Mrs. G. There is no truth in that suggestion.

Q. Do you notice any change in the thinking of Sheikh Abdullah ?

Mrs. G. I am afraid I do not see the purpose of this question but I can say that while Sheikh Abdullah has presented his arguments, I do not necessarily agree with them.

Q. Can you tell us, Mrs. Gandhi, just what you and Sheikh Abdullah discussed ?

Mrs. G. No, I am afraid that this is not the time for that.

Q. Madam, Sheikh Abdullah has stated that in his last meeting with Pandit Nehru, the latter agreed on the necessity of an understanding with Pakistan : but his successors have not adopted that policy. How far do you agree with that ?

Mrs. G. Sheikh Abdullah's arrest in 1965 was clear evidence that the hopes placed in him did not bear fruit. What transpired between Sheikh Abdullah and Pandit Nehru is not known to us today but, of course, it is clear that Sheikh Abdullah could not have gone to Pakistan without Pandit Nehru's explicit permission. There is no doubt that Pandit Nehru wanted to improve relations with Pakistan and I am equally anxious to stabilize our relations. The difference lies in the methods, but there is no difference of opinion on the basic problem.

Q. Will Sheikh Abdullah go to Pakistan again ?

Mrs. G. I will not comment on that.

Other government officials that day also expressed their opinion on Sheikh Abdullah's release and his public statements on the Kashmir issue. I noted that generally they viewed Sheikh Abdullah with suspicion and were uncertain about his motives. The former deputy leader of the Congress Parliamentary Party, Mr. Kengal Hanumanthaiya, wondered how Sheikh Abdullah could be permitted to go to Pakistan to talk about the solution of the Kashmir problem. He thought the Indian government ought to consider the propriety of some of the Sheikh's statements and he stated that he planned to raise the question of Sheikh Abdullah's release and his controversial statements at the forthcoming Hyderabad session of the Congress.

That same evening, January 5, a committee of the Central Cabinet was also discussing Sheikh Abdullah's views and decided that before taking any definite steps against him, he should be allowed to fully express himself. This liberal position was warmly contested but Sheikh Abdullah, unmindful or perhaps immune to the controversy he had already ignited, busied himself with discussions with various ambassadors, the Home Minister, Mr. Y.B. Chavan, the Minister for Industrial Development, Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed and the Minister for Aviation and Tourism, Dr. Karan Singh.

Sheikh Abdullah was giving many people an opportunity to hear his position again. My turn was coming next.

I was quite thrilled with the prospect of a personal and exclusive interview with Sheikh Abdullah and I approached my meeting with him with some apprehension and also some childlike excitement.

I arrived at Sheikh Abdullah's residence on the appointed day—6 January—at eight o'clock in the morning and was shown into a modestly decorated drawing room where Sheikh Abdullah was seated. He smiled graciously as I appeared which immediately put me at ease and as I studied his mobile eyes and expressive face, I reminded myself that I might glean as much from watching him as from listening to him. Uncertain about how much time I would actually be able to spend with him, I plunged straight into the questions I had prepared :

Q. Sheikh Saheb, how did your political life begin ?

A. It goes back many years now—but in Srinagar on July 13, 1931, a serious incident occurred in which government officials resorted to firing to quell some disturbances caused by a public demonstration. I felt as if the bullets were penetrating *my* heart. My political life in the real sense starts with this firing on the people. A number of Kashmiris were killed or wounded and as I was helping a wounded man, he cried, "Abdullah, I have done my duty. Now it is for you to go on with our mission." I was greatly influenced by this incident. I felt that nothing could stop me after this. But the Prime Minister of Kashmir at that time, Pandit Hari Krishna Kaul, managed to put a temporary brake on me—by arresting me on September 21, 1931.

All my clothes were removed by the prison authorities and for thirteen days I struggled between life and death—but even this treatment and the miseries I felt could not dampen my enthusiasm. I was released on October 3 and at once resumed my work for the liberation of the Kashmiri masses.

On January 23, 1932, I was arrested again but by then I had organized a team of workers to carry on in my place. They

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were a mixture of educated and uneducated Kashmiri Muslims—all bound together by their dedication to freedom. They would, I was sure, brave personal risk or even death but they would no longer submit to dishonour.

(Much later I discovered some moving comments on Sheikh Abdullah's early life made by a former member of Parliament, Chowdry Mohammed Shaffee Kashmiri, in which he said :

Kashmir, the second heaven, had become a veritable hell with the tyranny of a single man's rule. In 1930 this tyrannical rule reached its peak and at the slightest provocation, force and violence were used by the officials. During this miserable period, a tall, thin young man with some companions and an immense faith in God, came like an explosion of a bomb of freedom. When a public demonstration was held, the Maharaja resorted to firing and hundreds of young men were hit. But the fear of the ruler's strength was gone. When the young man who led this revolt against the ruler was put in jail, the whole valley resounded with the slogan, "Long live the Lion of Kashmir !" Majlis-e-Ahrar-e-Islam also stood in revolt and within a short period 60,000 to 70,000 persons courted arrest in Kashmir. All the jails were full and soon the administration had to relent and all the people arrested with Sheikh Abdullah were freed.)

Q. But what exactly were your objectives then ? Are they the same even today ?

A. Just a month ago Khwaja Ghulam Ahmed Kashmiri sent me a congratulatory letter for my sixty-second birthday. In reply I sent him a printed letter containing my opinion and beliefs. Have a look at this letter.

The Sheikh thereupon handed me a copy of the letter and it read :

3 Kotla Lane
New Delhi
11 Dec 1967

Respected Sir,

May you have God's protection and blessings. Your congratulatory letter for my birthday with prayers for my long life has been received. Many thanks for the same.

To me life is a journey which can be travelled in two ways. One can journey through it either as a slave to his wishes or as an obedient servant of God. In 1953 I had to decide which of the two ways I should adopt for myself. On one side people were beckoning to me to live a life of comfort, luxury, affluence and authority at the cost of my conscience. They were asking me to forget my

ideals of self-determination and the rights of the people of Kashmir to govern themselves and to barter away the rights of Kashmiris which have been trampled on by rulers for hundreds of years. On the other side, the Holy Quran was warning me in God's own voice not to reject God's path and not to fall prey to the comforts of life.

Wise men had been telling me that the promises of men have no value ; they can be broken at will. But on the other hand, God's direction to be faithful and loyal was calling upon me to fulfil my promises to the people at all cost. There was a great deal of mental conflict for me in those days but finally I decided that at no cost could I barter away the inherent right of the Kashmiris for self-determination.

For centuries the Kashmiris have been deprived of their rights. Whoever the ruler from outside Kashmir, he treated the Kashmiris harshly and drove them like cattle. In 1931, under my leadership, the Kashmiris awakened and with one mind and one voice, adopted the slogan, "It is the right of the Kashmiri people to form their own government." They were willing to shed their blood throughout Kashmir for this ideal. Interpreting their wishes, I had stated in a court of law in my trial that I was leading a movement for self-rule in Kashmir.

For a very long time Kashmir has attracted people by its natural beauty, by the art and industry of the Kashmiri artisans. Nature has enriched the land and attracted people from many nations. But if Kashmir has been such an object of attraction for people from outside, how much more is it for the Kashmiris who have been born in this beautiful setting !

In spite of the rich blessings of Nature, the people of Kashmir are poor and hungry. Their faces are emaciated and they have no hopes for the future. Their eyes are dull and without light. Those who sympathize with them are pained to see their pitiful condition.

After concerted efforts for many years, in 1947, the whole world accepted as fair and just their demand for self-determination. It would have been mean on my part to have bartered away the freedom of the people of Kashmir for my personal gain or high office.

I had realized much earlier that the path to truth was full of thorns and privations but with my strong faith in God, I adopted that path. Does not the Quran say : "He is the Master of East and West. No other person except God is worthy of our worship. Make Him your guide and your beacon light"?

I feel even today that my decision was right. It is difficult to express what mental satisfaction I had by this decision. From August 9, 1953, to this day when more than fourteen years have elapsed, countless manoeuvres and attacks have been launched against me to gag the voice of truth and justice but all their attempts have failed. The heart of every man in Kashmir, when it beats, seems to say, "Kashmir is our land. We shall decide our own fate."

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The difficulties in our way persist but the destination is clear. The need of the hour is that we should continue our efforts unabated and should put our foot forward with firm conviction. God willing, success will be ours.

May God give us faith and will to act.

Yours sincerely,
Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah

When I finished reading the letter, I looked up and, as if on cue, Sheikh Abdullah continued speaking :

For centuries the Pathans, Mughals, Sikhs and Dogras kept Kashmir under their rule and they used Kashmir as a centre of their pleasure and recreation. When the people of Kashmir awakened to the possibility of freedom, I wanted to lead and encourage them. The Hindus and Muslims, in fact all the residents of Kashmir, shared this new enthusiasm. In 1931, I was part of the majority of the Kashmir public which pledged to work for freedom or to die for the cause. Our revolt and protest were directed against the Amritsar Agreement (1846). Then, when the country was being partitioned, I was in jail. Maharaja Hari Singh did not want to accede to either Pakistan or India and he refused to sign any instrument of accession. In the meanwhile, Pakistan launched an attack against Kashmir and Maharaja Hari Singh had no choice left but to accede to India. The Pakistanis asked me to accede to Pakistan since the division of the country was on a communal basis and the Muslim majority areas had all become part of Pakistan. I told the Pakistanis frankly that the time had not come for the Kashmiris to decide the matter. We could not give up our right of self-determination and could not accede to Pakistan simply on the ground that there was a preponderance of Muslims in Kashmir. We could not disown lakhs of Hindus of Kashmir and any one who tried to harm them became our enemy. There was a monarchy in Kashmir and we wanted to decide our issues with the monarchy first. The question of accession was to be taken up later. Pakistan threatened us but India supported our point of view. This, in a nutshell, was the basis of the fight for freedom—the main objective of my life's work.

Q. Sheikh Saheb, can you give me the dates of your various arrests ?

A. My first arrest was, as I told you, in September 1931. I was in jail for thirteen days then. My second arrest was on January 23, 1932, and I was in jail that time for four months and thirteen days. On May 23, 1933, I was arrested under orders of the Prime Minister of Kashmir, Col. Colvin, for two months and eighteen days. Then on July 13, 1934, I was arrested for nineteen days under orders of the Prime Minister, Mr. Wakefield. On August 29, 1938, I was arrested for the fifth time under the orders of the Prime Minister Sir Gopala Swami Iyengar ; I was released after six months. On May 20, 1946, I was again arrested—this time under the orders of Pandit Ram Chandra Kak and I was in prison until October 1, 1947, by which time the country had been granted independence and partitioned. Fighting had already started between India and Pakistan and I was proud to take office as Prime Minister of Kashmir. However, by August 1953, I was again under suspicion and was arrested and sent to jail for four years and five months. I was released on January 8, 1958, but Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed ordered my arrest again on April 29, 1958, and I was in jail for five years, eleven months and nine days. After my release on April 18, 1964, I went on a pilgrimage to Mecca and upon my return to India on May 8, 1965, I was arrested again—this time by the Government of India. My previous arrests had been made by the Kashmir government. After that, as you know, I was released by the Government of India on January 2 of this year (1968).

Q. Before Independence in 1947, were you in favour of the establishment of two separate nations, India and Pakistan ?

A. The demand for the establishment of Pakistan was based on the erroneous view that Hindus and Muslims were separate nationalities. I hold that they do not belong to two different nationalities. They may indeed have individual problems but that need not separate them once and forever.

On this matter I had long discussions with Mr. Jinnah (Mohammed Ali Jinnah) and since I was then the President of the State People's Congress, I tried to put before him the problems of the people of Kashmir. Of course I agreed with him in regard to the ills of the Muslim community in general

but I disagreed with him about the cures for those ills. Muslims inhabited the whole continent of India and their places of worship, educational institutions and properties were all over the country. If the partition of the country into Hindustan and Pakistan was accepted, what would happen to Muslims and their property if they fell outside the new Pakistan ?

I was actively involved in seeking a solution to these matters when the Cripps Mission arrived in India. They presented another formula : according to their suggestion, India's unity would be safeguarded by allotting special representation to minorities, including Muslims. Mr. Jinnah accepted the Cripps Mission proposals which meant in effect that he had rescinded his demand for Pakistan. But I was most taken aback when Pandit Nehru rejected the Cripps proposals. The result was that the demand for Pakistan was renewed.

Pakistan was not a creation of Mr. Jinnah's. Pakistan was brought into being by Maulana Azad, Pandit Nehru and Sardar Patel. These people were responsible for the division of the country. If they had accepted the Cripps proposals there would have been no Pakistan and no bloodshed in the Indian continent later.

I had also met the Cabinet Mission and had put my views before them but at the time of partition I was in jail and in no position to prevent the unnecessary division of the people.

Q. Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan among others believes that the idea of partitioning India was conceived by outside powers who had no real interest in solving the problems of the nation. Do you agree with this ?

A. No, the fault is ours. Indo-Pak friendship should always be the aim of well-wishers of both countries. It is not now necessary that India and Pakistan merge—India has friendly relations with Nepal, Burma, and Ceylon and there is no fear in the minds of these nations that India will try to absorb them. Then why should Pakistan have such fears ? It is the duty of all patriotic Indians, including Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan, to nullify the efforts of those who sow the seeds of discord between India and Pakistan.

Q. When you were released from jail in October 1947, how did you find conditions in Kashmir ?

A. I found Kashmir in a very uncertain and unsettled condition. The future was very bleak....people doubted that India and Pakistan would be able to retain their independence. I wanted peace and prosperity for the Kashmiri masses above anything else and I therefore told the Congress and the Muslim League not to press the Kashmiris for an immediate decision on accession and that time must be given for reorganization within the state.

I sent one of my colleagues, Ghulam Mohammed Sadiq, who is now the Chief Minister of Kashmir, to Lahore to meet the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan, and to put my view of things before him. Unfortunately, Liaquat Ali Khan contended that the partition of the country was based on communal majorities and since Kashmir was a predominantly Muslim state, Pakistan had first rights on Kashmir. I did not accept this view. Ghulam Mohammed Sadiq told the leaders of Pakistan that no decision should be forced on Kashmir ; time should be given to the people to make the decision and whatever the decision, Pakistan and India should accept it.

Liaquat Ali Khan and Ghulam Mohammed Sadiq could not agree on any solution and Sadiq returned to Kashmir. Soon after his return the raiders from Pakistan attacked Kashmir.

In the midst of this time of political confusion and emotional stresses, swarms of refugees were moving from one country to the other and sick and wounded were everywhere. I was moved to alleviate the sufferings of both the Hindus and the Muslims. When I asked my wife about it, she agreed at once to help me in relief work. She gave up the purdah and did commendable work in organizing relief camps. For her hard work and sincere efforts, she was named "The Benevolent Mother" by the Kashmiris and was known by this name throughout the state.

Q. What was your reaction when the Pakistani raiders entered Kashmir in the name of Islam ?

A. Never in my life have I made any distinction between a Hindu and a Muslim. I told the people of Pakistan too that

the question of Kashmir was not one of Hindu and Muslim. Pakistan ignored me and threatened us with dire consequences and the results were disastrous. There were dead bodies lying all over Kashmir for days ! But I did not lose heart. I cared only for my duty towards the Kashmiris and I continued to discharge it day and night.

During that period, the people of Poonch tried to accede to Pakistan. Armies were sent to Poonch to meet the disturbances and there were great massacres in the area. And then all of a sudden, Pakistan attacked Kashmir. I do not agree with those who say that Pakistan attacked Kashmir to save Kashmir or that they had the least sympathy for the Kashmiri Muslims. If they had had any feelings for the Kashmiri Muslims, they would have attacked Jammu first as that is a predominantly Hindu province.

Pakistan attempted to settle the Kashmir issue by means of the sword but the Kashmiris resisted the attempt. During this period, Kashmiri volunteers guarded the houses of Hindus to see that no harm was done to them. Pakistani raiders marched onwards till they reached Srinagar (*sic*). The entire army of the ruler (Maharaja Hari Singh) was wiped out (*sic*) and the ruler had to send to India for aid.

Q. What role did you play in seeking aid from India ? What was your attitude about accession to India ?

A. At that time I told Gandhiji myself that the Kashmiris were fighting against Pakistan to uphold certain principles. In reply the statesmen of India argued that they would come to the rescue of Kashmir only if the instrument of accession was signed.

Whatever happened was due to the force of circumstances. I have already said that at the time of partition, I was in jail and the Maharaja of Kashmir wanted to remain independent. He hoped to have friendly relations with both India and Pakistan and accordingly he did not agree to accede to either. He wanted to make only temporary agreements and while India delayed such an agreement, Pakistan entered into it. Under this agreement Pakistan got control over all means of communication, post offices and telegraph offices and the Pakistani flag fluttered on all such buildings.

(On a previous occasion when Sheikh Abdullah was being interviewed by a representative of another publication, I happened to be present and what the Sheikh said on that occasion will perhaps more fully explain his position at the time of the accession of Kashmir to India.

The Sheikh was asked : "In 1953 your relations with Nehru seemed to be strained. Could you give us the reason for that misunderstanding ?"

Sheikh Abdullah responded at length :

In India there have been two trends of thought. Some people have always supported the idea of a secular state. Others have wanted to establish a Hindu state. The establishment of a Muslim state in Pakistan was a natural consequence of this second trend in India. Sardar Patel himself understood this matter and therefore assured the Maharaja of Kashmir that he had full rights to accede to Pakistan if he wanted to. But the Maharaja never wanted to accede to Pakistan—or India for that matter. But when the Pakistan raiders invaded Kashmir, he proposed to accede to India and India agreed to a temporary accession. I too agreed to this accession.

We who were members of the National Conference of Kashmir preferred to accede to India for several reasons. We thought that for the success of our economic plans and in light of the temperate political climate of India, we would be more successful as a part of India. Actually, after leaving the Muslim Conference, I laid the foundation of the National Conference of Kashmir because, in my tours throughout the state, I found that the Hindus of Kashmir were as poor as their Muslim brothers.

The two important economic plans of the National Conference were : (a) the abolition of zamindars and (b) the settlement of the debts of the peasantry. When we tried to carry out our programme, some people opposed us. Our plan affected Hindu and Muslim capitalists and zamindars equally but the Hindus had direct lines to Delhi. Both our measures were then labelled as anti-Hindu and this was a most unfortunate development.

The peasants and poor classes of Kashmir had been laden with debts for centuries and the machinations of capitalists had completely enslaved them. I established a special boon for settling these debts and, leaving aside constitutional implications, decided upon a practical procedure to implement my policy. This was only an economic matter and had no political or communal strings attached. There were instances in Kashmir where a Muslim money-lender in comparison to a Hindu money-lender treated his fellow Muslims more harshly. My reform measures were so effective that some ministers of the Central Government praised my accomplishments. In a very short time these debts and their interest were completely liquidated. The peasants of Kashmir are no longer in debt—but these measures were not generally appreciated by the Central Government and a vicious conspiracy was organized against me.

I was in turn called a British agent, a communist agent and an American agent. My enemies even undermined the loyalty that my associates had had for me. I wanted to take action against these persons and asked for the permission of Pandit Nehru to do so—but instead of giving me permission to prosecute them, he dismissed me and interned me. It was indicated that a conspiracy had been formed and I had been involved in it.

The Sheikh was then asked : I understand that at the time you wanted Kashmir to accede to India only in matters of defence, foreign affairs and communications. If such concessions had been made to Kashmir, would not other states have made the same demands ?

Sheikh Abdullah replied : Not necessarily. Under the constitution of India, after independence, these special rights were given to some rulers of some states in India for some time.

Q. Then wouldn't the independent states have been a danger to the unity of India ?

A. If these states could not present a danger to British India, how could they be a danger to independent India ?

Q. But don't you feel that after the departure of the British, circumstances changed considerably ?

A. *With the departure of the British the biggest change was that the entire defence system came into the hands of the centre while during the British rule, the states had maintained their own armies for defence. I would say that all these Indian states without seceding from India could be independent. In the Soviet Union these states, if they like, can be independent of the centre but this right has seldom been exercised. It is the same with Puerto Rico and other states in the United States.*

Q. *But why did you claim special privileges for Kashmir? The relation of Kashmir to the centre was just like the relation of the other states and there should be nothing special about Kashmir.*

A. *What others do is their job. I am doing what I consider best for Kashmir and I am within my rights.*

Q. *But you insisted on those three items—defence, foreign affairs and communications—as the only ones in which you would accede while the other states accepted the accession instruments in total. Were you doing that because Kashmir was a Muslim majority state?*

A. *It should be the business of the former rulers of the states to say why they stepped aside from power. Sardar Patel was a wonderful man to be able to bring the rulers of the states around to his point of view and he appealed to them in the name of patriotism and the unity of the country. He even put pressures on them through the Praja Mandras of the states and they acceded to his request. My fault is that I did not bow down to (that request.)*

I bring myself back to my interview with Sheikh Abdullah. I had originally been granted a twenty-minute interview but Sheikh Abdullah seemed to agree to continue the interview indefinitely. So I went on with my questions.

Q. Sheikh Saheb, what was the aftermath of Kashmir's accession to India ?

A. We were told that there would be no interference by India in Kashmir's internal matters. Sardar Patel was busy getting the instruments of accession signed in the various Indian states and he was successful in all cases but he could not come to terms with Kashmir. The Muslims of Kashmir feared that they would be lost in the vastness of India. I warned the leading statesmen of the time that India should not interfere with the independence of Kashmir and should let things proceed slowly for the time being. They did not heed my advice ; suddenly India announced to the world that Kashmir had acceded to India as an inseparable part of the new nation by the instrument of accession signed by the ruler of Kashmir. Cleverly the temporary accession was transformed into a permanent accession.

I was very perturbed and told Pandit Nehru, who claimed to be a champion of independence and democracy, that India had gone back on its promise. In reply, Nehru said : "Well, it is all quite a muddle at the moment." This callous reply struck me very deeply but did not unnerve me and I continued to meet the challenge of the time and especially the changed mentality of India. And this determination continues to this day. If we can fight Pakistan with whom we have religious and ethnic ties, why can't we fight other forces ? A true Muslim has no fear of death. The best death is that death which one meets on the battle-field.

So far there has been no referendum in Kashmir. Weak leaders have been put in power and my brave colleagues and I have been jailed. But still not a single soul is prepared to

accept the idea that Kashmir has finally acceded to India. The picture of Kashmir has changed a lot and it is a different Kashmir than it was at the time of partition. There are still those Muslims who shouted the slogans, "Long Live Gandhi and Nehru !" and who wanted to live in peace and friendship with India but the dishonesty of Indian statesmen has weakened their faith in India. They have witnessed riots, corruption, the plight of the poor people in India and the luxury of the wealthy and they are greatly influenced by these things. As a result a significant change has taken place in their outlook.

Q. When you became Prime Minister of Kashmir what matters required your attention most urgently ? How did you handle them ?

A. The most important and dangerous matter was the attitudes of the Muslims and Hindus towards each other. They looked upon each other with great suspicion and fear and I wanted to remove these unnecessary burdens from their minds. The Hindus of Jammu and Kashmir could not imagine that they could become a part of Pakistan because they knew what had befallen other Hindus in Pakistan. Similarly, the Muslims of Kashmir feared the results of accession to India. The fate of the Muslims in Kapurthala and other Punjabi states was fresh in their minds.

Certain developments in India further complicated the situation. The Hindu Mahasabha and some other organizations were of the opinion that since the Muslims had created an exclusively Muslim country, the Hindus must have a Hindu state. This difference in ideology created a big problem for the Kashmiris who believed only in human values and did not see things in terms of Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs or other religious groups.

Therefore, the biggest problem for me was to create mutual confidence between the two communities and to remove all fear from their minds. I felt that the accession of Kashmir to India could satisfy the Hindus well enough but the Muslims too ought to be satisfied. I thought that if I assured the Muslims that there would be no interference from India in the internal affairs of Kashmir, they too would be mollified. I was impressed

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by the democratic principles of India and the Muslims of Kashmir could easily be made to understand that their interests would be served by our acceding to India, with full freedom in their internal matters.

I was successful in creating confidence among both the Muslims and the Hindus as well, in spite of the extreme positions taken by some communal organizations. The Kashmiris did not want an iron-handed rule ; Kashmiris, whether Hindu or Muslim, have a similar character, similar complexion, belong to a common race and even have similar names. They wanted to live in peace together and I wanted to help them.

Q. Did you ever feel there was any necessity of holding an investigation into the circumstances of the death of Shyama Prasad Mukherjee ?

A. You see, you must look into the background of the event to fully appreciate this. Restrictions of entry into Jammu and Kashmir were imposed by the Central Government ; the Defence of India Rules had declared Kashmir to be a war zone. Even as Prime Minister of Kashmir I could move about in the state only with a special pass in my possession. I had protested against these restrictions in the very beginning but my protest proved fruitless. When Shyama Prasad Mukherjee decided to break these restrictions, I asked Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed, the Home Minister of Kashmir, to consult Pandit Nehru about it. Dr. Mukherjee was a friend of mine and I had great regard for him. When the Home Minister decided to arrest him and interned him in a private home in Nishat Bagh, I was naturally very upset. Pandit Nehru and Maulana Azad came to Kashmir about that time and I expected them to meet Dr. Mukherjee but they did not. I had suggested that after arresting Dr. Mukherjee he should be sent to Delhi but that was not done. Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed held the portfolio of Home Affairs and Shyam Lal Saraf the portfolio of Health and Jails. As a member of the administration I do not consider myself wholly free of responsibility in the matter, but these colleagues of mine were directly in charge of the departments concerned and I could establish contact with Dr. Mukherjee only through them. I did not even get authentic reports about his health from

these people ; and I received the news of his death quite unexpectedly one morning.

Q. But why didn't you order an inquiry into the whole matter ? Why could not the Chief Justice of the Kashmir High Court be appointed to look into the matter ?

A. Looking back, I feel I should have done that. But at the time I suggested that Dr. B.C. Roy might come to Kashmir and make general enquiries. He agreed to come but later was unable to do so. I especially wanted the Central Government to look into this matter so that all misunderstandings could be put to rest. In the atmosphere that was prevailing, even the Chief Justice of Kashmir would not have been free from criticism or the charge of impartiality. Unfortunately, the Central Government did not hold an investigation. During this period, on the ninth of August, a vicious conspiracy was hatched against me and contrary to all principles of justice and fair play, I was dismissed and jailed. On my release in 1958, I demanded an impartial enquiry into Dr. Mukherjee's death but no attention was paid to my request. If there are any doubts even today, an impartial enquiry can be held and I am prepared to bear the consequences if any one thinks I had a hand in Dr. Mukherjee's death.

Q. Do you feel that the presence of the Indian Army in Kashmir increased the tensions between the Hindus and Muslims of Kashmir ?

A. In this respect I had to face insurmountable difficulties. When the first battalion of Indian Army troops arrived in 1947, there was some misunderstanding about the purpose for which it had been sent. The army seemed to feel that a war was being waged between Hindus and Muslims whether the Muslims were from Pakistan or Kashmir itself. I had quite a time erasing this idea.

I'll give you an example of the kinds of difficulties I faced. A Sikh Regiment from Patiala asked for the services of a few *razakars*. We sent them some volunteers to help them but the next morning four of these volunteers were untracable. When the regiment left, we found the bodies of these four volunteers and naturally the recovery of the dead bodies caused quite a

stir throughout Kashmir. I called a conference at once and told those present : "The fault does not lie with those who killed the volunteers because they have seen their own relatives murdered most ruthlessly. These events have stirred a volcano of hatred in them and they therefore consider every Muslim their enemy. Our job is to cleanse the hatred from their minds. We should explain to them thoroughly that we are not fighting a battle of Hindus and Muslims but rather we are fighting for a noble cause. We have decided to tell the commanders of these forces to explain to their troops the purpose of this war." We acted on this decision and the results from then onwards were very satisfactory.

Q. After the Cease-fire, when you were able to start implementing the reforms you had planned, did you encounter any opposition from more conservative elements in the population ?

A. First I consolidated the administration and got the government machinery functioning. But I had to fulfil my promises to the Kashmiri masses. Among these promises were agricultural reforms and relief of peasants who were indebted to money-lenders. As part of the agricultural reforms, we abolished the *zamindari* and *jagirdari* systems in the state and land was distributed to the actual tillers of the soil. There were Hindus as well as Muslims in the *jagirdar* class but the Hindus were able to arouse some sympathy for themselves in Delhi. They propagandized against my government and indicated that my programmes were communally based. There were people in Delhi who believed them and as a result, relations between the Central Government and the government of Kashmir became very strained. We maintained then and still do that what we did was not based on communal considerations at all but purely on economic necessity. In the same way, when we tried to annul the debts of the peasants to the money-lenders, the Hindu money-lenders petitioned Delhi for assistance. Finally when we abolished the hereditary rights of the Maharaja, those dependent on the monarchy reacted vigorously and ascribed our actions to communal motives thus increasing the tension between the centre and the state government.

Q. There was criticism that you had adopted some discriminatory policies in the services in the state. How do you refute that criticism ?

A. I do not call what I did discriminatory. During the rule of the Maharaja, Muslims did not have representation in the services proportionate to their population in the state. After 1947, they naturally demanded more representation. A similar situation arose in Hyderabad where the Hindus demanded representation according to their superior numbers there. My main problem was that I could not introduce drastic changes in policy. I could not remove some people from office since they had been holding the positions for a long time. I wanted to find alternative work for them and I introduced additional reforms but at a gradual pace. I tried to give some representation to those persons who had inadequate—or no—representation. Now would you call this a policy of discrimination ?

Q. Before the elections of the Constituent Assembly of Kashmir in 1952, you said that in the absence of a plebiscite, the Constituent Assembly was competent enough to decide the Kashmir question. What was the reaction to this announcement of yours ?

A. I was quite satisfied that the Constituent Assembly could, in the absence of a plebiscite, resolve the issue of Kashmir once and for all as they were the duly elected representatives of the Kashmiri people. But the Government of India did not approve of my plan at all. However, Pandit Nehru was very disturbed and said that he could not go back on the promises made to the United Nations. Mr. B.N. Rau, the permanent representative of India at the United Nations, took the same position and declared in the United Nations that although the assemblies of the states of India have the right to decide their own issues, in the case of Kashmir, the promise of the plebiscite had to be honoured. Thus the promise of the plebiscite was reaffirmed and the right of the people of Kashmir to decide their own future was restated.

Q. I have heard that you were going to declare Kashmir completely independent from India on August 21, 1953, but

that before you could do so, you were arrested on August 9. Is this true ?

A. No. The charge that I was planning to declare Kashmir independent is completely baseless.

Q. What then were the reasons for your arrest in August 1953 ?

A. My arrest on August 9, 1953, was based on my differences with the Government of India—differences which had existed for some time. The Indian government was going back on promises made to me and the people of Kashmir. My contention was that if the government went back on its promises it would mean a loss of prestige to Delhi and to me. All the sacrifices of the people of Kashmir would be wasted and the morale of the Kashmiris would plunge to a new low. I even said that if these promises were not fulfilled, the prestige and reputation of Pandit Nehru would be affected and India's position in the eyes of the other nations would be diminished. I issued a warning to India but nobody paid any heed and my opponents quickly came out into the open.

The night of August 9 was very cold. I was staying at the government guest house at Gulmarg while on tour. My wife and children were with me along with my secretary and other staff. At about four o'clock in the morning, my secretary awakened me and informed me that the Dak Bungalow was surrounded by armed military police. I came out of my bedroom and saw a police superintendent whom I knew personally. I asked him what authority he had to come to the rest house in the middle of the night. Instead of replying, he showed me the warrant for my arrest and pointed towards the soldiers armed with machine guns. I asked him to allow me time to finish my morning prayers and he agreed. I had just finished my prayers when Maharaja Karan Singh's ADC delivered a letter to me from the Maharaja offering his sympathies on my arrest. The letter also conveyed notice of my dismissal as Prime Minister. Attached to the letter was another document signed by Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed, Shyam Lal Saraf and Girdhar Lal Dogra, indicating that they all had lost confidence in my leadership. After reading the letter, I said to

myself that the Maharaja had no authority to dismiss me and my ministry. At about 4.20 a.m. I bade good-bye to my wife and children and moved under a military escort to Udhampur, about 175 miles from Gulmarg.

I was imprisoned in a house belonging to the ruler of Kashmir and all my communication with the outside world came to an end. After a few days I learned that my house in Srinagar had been sealed and my wife and children were not permitted to stay there. My family was helpless and had no one to turn to. People were so afraid of the regime in Kashmir that they were reluctant to give their houses on rent to my children. For some time the members of my family stayed with a relative, Khwaja Ali Shah, but then fortunately a Hindu, Madan Lal, came to my family's rescue and in spite of the coercive measures of the government, he extended a hand of friendship to my wife and children by offering them a portion of his house. Later my wife was offered an allowance by the government but she refused to accept it.

In spite of this treatment my personal relations with Pandit Nehru continued to be very good. As soon as he learned of the privations suffered by my family, he issued orders for their rehabilitation and my wife had to accept an allowance from the government. I was permitted to have newspapers while in detention and was also allowed to listen to the radio—a radio on which all the stations had been sealed except Srinagar. Probably the person who sealed the stations did not know that I had been a science student. In no time I was able to break all the seals and listen to any station I chose !

I was quite happy as a matter of fact while I was in jail. My opponents and adversaries must have been jubilant thinking that they had cut off my connections with the rest of the world but could they shut me out or separate me from my God who is my protector and with whom I have permanent and lasting ties ? My God was with me and any person who establishes a relation with God can never feel lonely.

I had two choices open to me : one could lead to luxury and affluence, the other to discomfort and misery. After some

careful thinking, I decided on the course of action beset with difficulties and discomforts. It was a course of faith and truth nevertheless and my heart urged me to accept it. I firmly believed that the darkness would soon disappear and therefore I bowed my head to the decision.

Pandit Nehru was a gentle soul. Within a few months the attitude of the jail administrators towards me changed considerably. My wife and children were permitted to see me and I could get authentic information about events in Kashmir. In comparison to my previous experiences in jail, the months of 1953-54 were quite comfortable and I was treated as a human being with certain facilities and conveniences which had been sorely lacking earlier.

Q. While you were in jail did you make any changes in your plans for Kashmir or in your view of the situation ?

A. Even today I stand by the promises I made to the people of Kashmir. I do not call a person a man if he goes back on his promises. When people came to know that Sheikh Abdullah would not quietly say yes to every directive, I was arrested. Some of my companions deserted me and it was a trying time for me. But I had decided to sacrifice worldly comforts for my principles. I knew full well the consequences of my decision : personal inconvenience, hunger, privation for my family, jail. But by God ! these difficulties pale into insignificance when compared to the hardships and sacrifices of our dear Prophet in preaching the principles of Islam.

I am a sincere friend of India and therefore I cannot be her enemy. I had been put in jail for fourteen years only because of my attitudes and beliefs. But I swear by God, who controls my life, that I was composed and at ease and for this very reason the people who put me in prison are now ashamed and repentant and I am consoling them ! I am convinced that we must engender love and affection for each other for hatred will breed only division and enmity. You can hold Kashmir in subjugation with bayonets only for a short while. You can cut Kashmiris to pieces but you cannot win their hearts by force. The earnest desires, wishes and longings of Kashmiris will certainly lead them to their destination. The strength of

love is mightier than the force of guns. I remember clearly the words of Acharya Bhave when, three years ago (in 1965) he said in one of his speeches, that the problem of Kashmir was not yet settled. To say that Kashmir was a part of India like Bombay or Delhi is to shut your eyes to reality.

A few days later, on January 12, 1968, Sheikh Abdullah addressed a group of Kashmiri traders at a luncheon at Ashoka Hotel in New Delhi. As part of my study of Sheikh Abdullah that month, I noted the contents of his speech and since his topic was allied to what I have recorded above, I include it here :

We had taken a vow that we would obtain an honourable place for the people of Kashmir and failing that we would sacrifice our lives. Our fight is age-old, not at all a new undertaking. It is not directed towards India but towards those forces that have deprived Kashmiris of their rights. We are demanding only those elementary rights which are accepted as justly ours by people all over the world.

God's beautiful blessings in Kashmir have become a scourge for us. If you look at the pages of history, you will find that every monarch and government has wanted to own and rule Kashmir. Aware of these facts, some young men of Kashmir decided to seek a place of honour for the people of Kashmir even at the cost of their own lives. In 1931 I led this movement, telling my colleagues that if they wanted to save the honour of the Kashmiri masses they would have to go through a bloodbath. The basis of our agitation was our claim to our birthright—the self-determination that was denied to us in the past.

People of other countries admire the natural beauty of Kashmir and have used the people of Kashmir for their own pleasure. We have been told that we were purchased for money along with the land of Kashmir in the Treaty of Amritsar in 1846 when Kashmir was sold to Gulab Singh for Rs. 75 lakhs.

When we started our agitation, we declared that Kashmir is our motherland and only the residents of Kashmir can decide the future of Kashmir. Our slogan, "Kashmir for the Kashmiris ! Self-determination is the right of the Kashmir masses !" caught the imagination of the Kashmir public and became popular. The idea of self-determination later on spread to other Indian states as well but it started in Kashmir. The principle of self-determination is the basis of the United Nations Charter which has now been accepted by most of the nations of the world. The Kashmiris were denied this right but I will be fair in my contention. This right was taken away by neither India nor Pakistan ; we were denied this right long ago and that is why we started our agitation for its restoration as far back as in 1931.

At the time of Partition, we did not accept Pakistan's contention that as Kashmir was a Muslim majority state it should join Pakistan. We replied that we started our agitation in 1931 against the idea that we are a property to be ceded to any claimant. Kashmir is inhabited by respectable human beings all of whom have equal rights. We do not discriminate between Hindus and Muslims : the life of a Hindu is as sacred to me as that of a Muslim and any harm to a Hindu shall be prevented at the cost of our lives for Islam teaches us that it is our duty to defend and help our weak neighbour.

When Pakistan attacked us, we acceded to India. One of the conditions of the accession was that it was a temporary accession and after conditions in the state were stabilized, the people of Kashmir would be asked to decide their future. The representative of India, Mr. Iyengar, took the same position in the United Nations conferences. Pakistan did not agree to this position in the beginning but accepted it later India meanwhile declared that Kashmir had finally acceded to India and the decision could not be rescinded.

The situation deteriorated to such an extent that people only talked of India and Pakistan, completely eliminating the Kashmiris. I would like to tell India and Pakistan clearly that Kashmir is inhabited by people who know no sacrifice too great for their cause. There is only one way to eliminate them and that is to silence them forever !

Sheikh Abdullah concluded his speech by calling on all Kashmiris and friends of Kashmir to remain steadfast in striving for their objective as he had done through all the years of struggle and disappointment. He said that only through their unity can they hope to achieve their aim and constant dedication would help to unify them.

I had noted in Sheikh Abdullah's speech at Ashoka Hotel that he mentioned self-determination for the people of Kashmir and at our next session together I pursued the subject with him.

Q. You have frequently referred to self-determination for the people of Kashmir but it is true, is it not, that there have been free elections held in Kashmir for the representatives to the state assembly. Are the Kashmiris not exercising a certain amount of self-determination there ?

A. The political parties that participate in the elections of the Kashmir Assembly are all under the influence of the Indian parties and these elections as such are not fair. We willingly acceded to India, fought against Pakistan and secured India's favour for ourselves. But now conditions have changed considerably and the type of democracy in power in Kashmir is entirely unsuited to the Kashmiri masses.

Q. Which political party in Kashmir has the biggest following ?

A. The Congress Party in Kashmir exists in name only. The National Conference is also dying out. The Plebiscite Front has a large following and this is the only party which has been able to capture the hearts of the people.

Q. Do you have any preference among the political parties of India ?

A. I like every political party which holds human values and justice in high esteem. I like a party which sides with persons whose rights have been violated whether the person is a Hindu, Muslim or Sikh. I am a friend of suffering people and my first preference is for the party which upholds the rights of the down-trodden.

Q. What is your opinion about communism ?

A. You will find communism in every country where people are poor and no attention is paid to their condition. I think communism will flourish most in a country where there is a big gap between man and man and class and class. Fortunately there is not much leaning towards communism in Kashmir.

Q. Would you be able to deal with reactionary organizations like the Jan Sangh ?

A. I am not a man to be easily subdued by any party. During my Prime Ministership I had control over these organizations but now of course that control is no longer there.

Q. I believe you have great differences of opinion with the former Jan Sangh President, Professor Balraj Madhok.

A. I know Professor Madhok very well and I do not agree with many things he says. I pray to God to show him the right path. In 1947, when the Kashmiris were experiencing great tragedies, his role was very harmful to the people and the state. It is regrettable that on his return to India he praised his own actions. I had issued a warrant for his arrest but he returned to India before it could be executed. May God show him the path followed by the Buddha, Lord Krishna and the other saints of India for the guidance of the Indian people.

Q. Have you developed good relations with leftist parties ?

A. I had very good relations with the progressive parties of the country but unfortunately some leftist elements in 1953 misunderstood me. Now, however, I think that the clouds of misunderstanding have dispersed and there seems to be a good chance for new mutual understanding.

I had hoped to be able to get Sheikh Abdullah to speak about his own view of conditions in India but, admittedly, I was having a difficult time fitting in all the questions I had come prepared with and all the new ones that kept cropping up. However, when Sheikh Abdullah visited Bihar in late January, I followed his speeches closely. In part he said :

Although I was in detention, I was not unaware of conditions in Bihar. Believe me, my heart was with you. I have wept as much for you in your misfortune as you yourselves have. And the Kashmiris are not unconcerned about your miseries nor can you afford to be unconcerned about the difficulties of the people of Kashmir.

Kashmiris are keenly observing if Pakistan, a Muslim country, can be successful in making a haven for Muslims. They are also observing how far India which boasts of its democratic principles, equality and justice has been able to put its claim into practice. You cannot deprive a race of its language, culture, religion and civilization. I advise you not to become disheartened—if you can overcome your differences and fill your heart with strength, unity, love and brotherhood amongst yourselves, God is bound to help you in achieving your objective. You cannot solve your problems by feeling sorry for yourselves, weeping and complaining. You can reach your destination only by following a straight course.

On January 23, at a huge public meeting in Patna, at which Acharya Bhawe, Jai Prakash Narain and the Chief Minister of Bihar, Mr. Mahamaya Prasad Sinha, were present, Sheikh Abdullah again addressed the people :

The late Pandit Nehru, during his last days, felt strongly that friendship between India and Pakistan was essential. After China attacked India, he realized that if India and Pakistan continued to live in opposite camps the freedom of both would be endangered. Accordingly, he permitted me to visit Pakistan and asked me to use my influence to encourage amity between the two countries. But luck and time did not favour us for Pandit Nehru died soon after.

But to the young people let me say this : it is time for you to forge ahead and undo the mistakes committed by your predecessors. Hostile relations between India and Pakistan do the greatest harm to the interests of the young. Today after twenty years of freedom, when we see thousands of people hungry and miserable, tears flow down our cheeks. Was it for this that we achieved freedom ? When I

was in detention, I used to weep for the masses of Bihar. After I was released, I saw a documentary film on the drought conditions in Bihar and again I cried for the poor people of that state. I ask you, what did the people of Bihar get by attaining freedom? Who is responsible for their famine? The Ganges passes through Bihar but if the farmers do not have water for irrigation, how can they raise crops? People holding the reins of administration are responsible for this disaster. It is time the resources of this country were utilized properly!

The progress and affluence of Kashmiris are linked with India; the development of India depends upon the economic progress of Pakistan and the affluence of Pakistan depends upon the economic progress of India. I have always said that Mr. Jinnah and the other Muslim leaders were not the ones responsible for the creation of Pakistan although the conditions prevailing at the time provoked the ten crores of Muslims to demand partition of the country. It is natural for people to think in those terms when they are faced with difficult circumstances. This way of thinking was wrong but at the time it was to be expected and whether it was good or bad, India and Pakistan became a reality.

When our interview continued, I sought Sheikh Abdullah's opinions on other current matters—though perhaps of a more personal nature.

Q. Which public figures do you think has influenced your political views ?

A. Since I was a student, politics has attracted me—and since that time the whole world has been in a state of turmoil. During my youth, a few personalities appeared on the Indian scene and attracted innumerable young men to them. Among these were Mahatma Gandhi, Maulana Mohammed Ali, Maulana Shaukat Ali, Pandit Nehru and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. Like other young men, I was attracted towards these figures. Two other personalities—Ghazi Abdul Karim and Mustafa Kemal Pasha outside India also had considerable influence on me. They were great freedom fighters and rendered valuable service to their countries.

Q. Other than the *Quran*, which books do you particularly cherish ?

A. The poetry of Iqbal has always been my favourite and has left deep impressions on me. His poetry creates an emotional upheaval within me and has given new meaning to my life with every reading. I have met Iqbal a number of times and I hold him in high esteem for his message to the Islamic world. I wish I knew Persian so I could delve deeper into Iqbal's philosophy in his Persian poems. Nonetheless, my greatest guide has been Islamic history and the *Quran*. Also Abul Kalam Azad's writings in *Al Hilal* and *Al Balagh*, the writing of Allama Mashraqui, the life of Napoleon, Rousseau's philosophy and the history of the French Revolution have influenced my thinking and helped shape my ideas.

Q. Is Iqbal your favourite Urdu poet ?

A. Of course, my field of activity is certainly far removed from poetry and literature but yes, Iqbal's poetry does have the greatest attraction for me. I am also fond of Hafiez Jullundheri's work and I know him personally.

Q. Which do you think has been your most unforgettable experience ?

A. My first arrest. Some of my colleagues and I, after our arrest, were detained in some barracks in Badami Bagh. The people of Kashmir were greatly agitated about our arrest and were demanding our immediate release. Fearing that people might try to release us forcibly the authorities transferred us in the middle of the night to Hari Prabat Fort.

We were sleeping when at about two o'clock in the morning we were rudely awakened, handcuffed and told to board a military truck. We thought that we would be either executed then and there or transferred outside Kashmir. We realized after travelling some distance that we were going towards Srinagar. There was complete silence everywhere and nothing was moving on the road except a few soldiers standing at intervals armed with rifles.

The truck stopped at Hari Prabat Fort and we were ushered inside. Pointing to a dark and dingy room, the police officer asked who wanted to go in first. Ghulam Nabi bravely offered to go but I said that as the group had chosen me as their leader, I would go first. Before entering the room, I addressed them briefly :

Dear Comrades, everyone who comes into this world must die some day and must experience separation from his near and dear ones. If you find me separated from you, do not mind because this separation is only temporary. Soon we shall meet in the other world. People of faith need not worry about separation nor should they fear death. Whether we die today or tomorrow we should be happy in the realization that we are sacrificing our lives for our countrymen. At least we shall not be dying the miserable death of slaves. I have full faith that our aims and objectives will be brought nearer fulfilment through this sacrifice.

After my brief speech, I entered the cell. It was absolutely dark and devoid of bedding or conveniences. Nevertheless we were happy enough when we discovered that we had been brought there for detention and not for execution !

Some reports have suggested that during my detention in Hari Prabat Fort Maulana Azad, who was visiting Kashmir at the time, came to meet me. This is incorrect. In fact, soon after my release, I went to see Maulana Azad with a minister from Kashmir, Wazir Nawab Khusro Jung.

There is another event in my life that I would like to record with you—Mahatma Gandhi's visit to Aligarh Muslim University. He came to speak to the students of the University and Professor Sharif, the acting Vice-Chancellor, in his welcoming speech, said that the students should not humble themselves before any one for their just rights. This sentence of Professor Sharif's made a deep impression on me and I have made it a principle of my life since then.

Q. Were there any other events or situations which have impressed you especially?

A. Just look at the history of Kashmir—on any page you will find that the ruling class has always exploited the poor Kashmiris. The limit of this exploitation was the mortgaging of Kashmiri women to money-lenders when their families could not pay their debts. And this was true for Hindus and Muslims alike.

Sometime ago I came across a number of Hindu families in Rajouri whose possessions had been confiscated by the representative of the ruler—who was himself a Hindu. Why should the Hindu ruler exploit the Hindu population? But you see, it was not a question of Hindu or Muslim but that of exploiter and exploited. This exploitation goes on against humanity at large. Since I am a Muslim and the Muslim religion enjoins us to resist exploitation, I decided to fight this evil. I enlarged the Kashmir Muslim Conference and formed the National Conference. I told my followers, "If you, Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs of Kashmir, are going to fight against injustice and tyranny, you must all join my camp." My slogan echoed not only in the Valley of Kashmir, in the hills of Jammu and in the snow covered peaks of Gilgit and Ladakh but also well beyond Kashmir.

Q. You seem to have concentrated your attention solely on Kashmir and the problems there. Are you also interested in helping the Muslims of the rest of India?

A. My special field is Kashmir. How can I leave the cause of Kashmiri Muslims for whom I have taken upon myself a responsibility? A time may come when, after discharging my duty towards Kashmir, I can come out to take up the cause of Indian Muslims. But one should not conclude from this that I am not interested in the problems of Indian Muslims.

Q. Do you think it would be wise for Muslims to form an exclusive political party for the protection of their rights ?

A. I have not really given much thought to this. Until I meet some of the Muslim leaders and diagnose the disease, I cannot suggest a remedy. Under the circumstances, I cannot guide the Muslims of India nor can I run the risk of giving them advice. But the Indian Muslims must unite, forget their differences and strive for new understanding and purpose. When I was in prison, I heard that the Muslims of India had organized a convention and had established an advisory council. This sort of thing can be quite useful.

Q. What about the Jamiatul-ulema ?

A. I have heard that some differences of opinion have cropped up among the members of this organization. These differences are harmful to their interests and might lead to the death of the party. The Muslims have to seriously consider whether they should form a strong single party of their own or join hands with some other political party. The disappearance of the Muslim League in India leads to some doubt regarding the possibility of forming an exclusively Muslim political party.

But the whole Muslim situation today worries me. Some wish to form a party to promote religious aims; others are organizing educational societies; and some are only interested in maintaining their own leadership. The result is that little useful effort is put in to all this. The Muslims should, I feel, unite to form a common platform for themselves. They should try to stand on their own feet—not depend upon the support of other parties.

Fortunately for me, a few days after this discussion, Sheikh Abdullah addressed the Muslims of Deoband on the same subject. I recorded his remarks as they reflect the intimate relationship he seems to have with his fellow Muslims and his dedication to his religion.

We have to make an honest attempt to heal the wounds of the people. These wounds will not heal with further hatred but only with love and friendship. It is time we sorted out our problems and thought of some solutions. Our sacred Book clearly tells us that our salvation lies in following the path shown by our noble Prophet. Muslims should then model themselves on the teachings of Islam. If they do, they will be respected and their religion will be respected. Non-Muslims do not read the Quran and are ignorant of the basic principles of our religion. They can judge Islam only by the conduct of Muslims but most unfortunately Muslims do not pattern their conduct on the teachings of their religion with the result that today a number of evils are found in our behaviour.

Very recently, in June 1967, the Muslims lost control of the mosques in Jerusalem. Israel, with a limited area and a small army, was placed against a vast Arab world with unlimited manpower. You are aware of the results of this war. The vast Arab countries were helpless against Israel. Why? The Arab defeat was caused by the Muslim peoples' deviation from the path shown by the Prophet. We are too much in love with worldly pleasures and have interpreted even the teachings of the Quran according to our convenience.

If we want to put an end to our miseries, we should correct our conduct. Misfortunes do come but men of courage must face them boldly. How long can Muslims afford to sit in inaction? How long can they depend on the uncertain promises of tomorrow? Until we present good conduct we cannot give a message of unity and solidarity to the world.

What was the strength of the Prophet's companions? There were only 313 supporters in the battle of Badr. They had very few arms and yet they were able to change the course of history. But the Muslims of the present day have neither the ambition nor the courage nor the practical wisdom of the Prophet and his companions. We must be united and stand like a wall of granite; we should remember two things: our duties towards God and our duties towards our brothers. We should treat our neighbours well and we should be prepared to share their misfortunes.

Crores of Muslims have adopted India as their motherland and they have a number of duties towards this country, among them to defend its honour. If they do not act according to the teachings of their religion, what opinion will the Hindus of India have about them? The Muslims should fear none except God. They should side with the truth whether it goes against their interest or the interest of their own dear ones.

We in Kashmir are continuing our fight against injustice but we are not unmindful of the difficulties of Indian Muslims. We shall not take any step which may harm their interests, but we shall not submit to any blackmail. It is the right of Indian Muslims to live in their mother country but the right does not depend on the accession of Kashmir to India. The Muslims of India should be able to say that if Kashmiris accede to India, they are welcome and if they do not, it is their choice.

Islam has a human outlook. It does not differentiate between man and man. God, according to the teachings of Islam, is the master of the world, not the master of Muslims alone. Islam teaches equality. A true Muslim does not harm his neighbour. The Muslims of today should cultivate strength of character with which they, like other great Muslims of India, can fight their battles without armies and bloodshed.

When my interview continued a few days later, I still had a few questions for Sheikh Abdullah about Muslims in India.

Q. What remedy could you suggest for the periodic Hindu-Muslim riots ?

A. Disturbances are a curse of God. They not only retard the progress of the country but they put the best human qualities to shame. The disturbances can be stopped if the rulers of the country are clean at heart and if they view Hindus and Muslims not as Hindus and Muslims but as human beings.

The Prophet Mohammed's excellent qualities and habits can be our example. If Muslims seek guidance from his teachings, all their problems can be solved. Impeding any solution is the fact that the conduct of Muslims has deviated greatly from the teachings and practices of the Prophet. We have no fear of God left and yet only full faith in God will direct our lives in peace. The concept of secularism is not clear in many minds. The day people understand the correct implications of secularism and begin to respect the idea, most of our difficulties will end.

(Sheikh Abdullah's feelings about his religion and his fellow Muslims run very deep and he speaks with much emotion and insistence on these points. I wanted to probe into some of Sheikh Abdullah's personal feelings about religion and felt sure that he would cooperate as he had done so copiously already.)

Q. Do you think the personal law of the Muslims should be interpreted rigidly or can some liberties be taken with it ?

A. Islamic law did not allow four marriages for the sake of satisfying sensuality. The underlying idea was to improve the society of the times where people used to contract a number of marriages. The provisions in the *Quran* are restrictive rather than permissive. Times have changed naturally and the population of the world is increasing rapidly. The idea of family planning should not be looked at from the religious point of view. The problem is economic.

Q. Would you like to attend a meeting of the World Muslim Brotherhood ?

A. When I was in Mecca the last time, such a conference was in session. I did not get an invitation to attend until very late but I did attend. This year, too, if I am invited, I shall consider attending.

Q. You were a student at Aligarh Muslim University, I believe. What are your views about the recent ordinances passed regarding the Muslim University ? Do you think it would be good if the essentially Muslim character of the University was modified to a more secular one ?

A. I cannot say with any certainty whether such an ordinance would be in the interest of the University or not for I have not studied the matter. But I can say one thing : the Muslim University has a character of its own and it should not be vitiated by any restrictive measures. I feel that under the present circumstances the Muslim character of the University should not only be preserved but it should be afforded opportunities to expand so that secularism may live.

If the Government of India's ordinances are meant to obviate the Muslim purpose and character of the University then they must be condemned. I remember vividly that in the first convocation after independence, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Dr. Zakir Hussain had promised that there would be no interference by the government in the internal matters of the University and its character would be preserved. These promises should be honoured.

Russia is a country which does not believe in God; its communism is the antithesis of religion. In spite of this the character and individuality of Muslim educational institutions in the Soviet Union have been preserved. I am surprised that this problem should arise in India !

Q. How do you explain or to what do you attribute your strong attachment to your religion ?

A. There can be only two reasons for a man's staunch faith in his religion : one is his own nature and the other is his environment. I am grateful to God that I was blessed with both. My elder brother believed in regular prayer and my mother was very particular about religious observances. She

often talked to me about God and the Prophet's life and my elder brother took me to the mosque for prayers and insisted that I read the *Quran*.

For a strong faith in religion, the most important factor is a child's environment. Since I was in a religious atmosphere as a child, religion became a part of my very nerves and tendons.

Q. Would you mind answering some personal questions—about your childhood and your family ?

A. Not at all. All that I am is known to all. I was born in Srinagar on December 5, 1905. My father's name was Sheikh Mohammed Ibrahim and he traded in Kashmiri shawls but I was hardly fifteen days old when he died. My father had been married twice and I was the son of his second wife. I was brought up by my mother and elder brother but in all we were six brothers and two sisters. My brothers are still dealing in Kashmiri shawls in Kashmir.

Q. What kind of education did you have ?

A. I had my early education at the Government High School in Srinagar. Later I was admitted to the Islamia College in Lahore and from there I went to Aligarh Muslim University where I obtained my Master of Science degree. Actually, from childhood I had a strong leaning towards science and I pursued this subject in my studies.

Q. What impressions do you have of your childhood ?

A. Like other children, I was deeply influenced by my environment and yet I must have had a revolutionary spirit right from the beginning. I was given to deep thinking ; most children are curious about things but they soon forget what they have learned. I must have been an exception. I saw everything and every event with a penetrating eye and retentive memory. In this respect, I was different from other children. Any remarkable event left a deep impression on my mind. I was a quiet but strong-willed child.

Q. In what economic class would you rate your family as you were growing up ?

A. I belonged to a middle class family which could be called neither rich nor poor. We were a joint family and lived together in one house.

Q. Is there a particular event in your childhood that still remains with you ?

(I note here that before Sheikh Abdullah answered this question, he made the most open exhibition of emotion so far in our meetings together. Until now he had been superbly cordial, patient, warm, often earnest, frequently smiling at my questions—or others' possible reactions to his responses—but now he sank into a momentary depression, for the first time appearing sad, as he began to describe an event in his childhood.)

A. There are a number of incidents of my childhood which are fresh in my memory to this day. They have left a deep and abiding impression on my mind. When I am surrounded by old memories and I arrange my thoughts, I am reminded of my dear neighbour whose house was separated from ours only by a thin wall. He was older than I but we were good friends and he was employed in my brother's shawl factory so we had many things to bind us together. He was a gentle, self-respecting and highly intelligent person and I treasure his memory. One day when he did not report for work, I learned that he was ill—then three days later he was dead. As I looked upon my friend's dead body, my eyes overflowed with tears. When I came to know the circumstances of his death, I was overwhelmed with grief and dissolved in tears.

I could not imagine that my dear gentle friend could be separated from me so quickly and so painfully. You see, he was indebted to a money-lender and quite unable to repay his debt. The money-lender often came to his house and abused him profusely. Ultimately my friend could tolerate it no longer and started denying himself food in order to save money to repay the debt. While he provided rice for his brothers and sisters, he denied himself any sustaining food. Soon he was overtaken by a serious illness which undermined his vitality. He consumed to work hard but tuberculosis—galloping tuberculosis—finally claimed his life.

While I looked at my friend's face, I thought of the injustice prevailing in the world : some people have so much to eat and much to spare while others have so little that they die of hunger. What an unsympathetic world we are living in !

My childhood days are full of events which have left an indelible impression on my mind. These incidents not only helped to form my character but greatly stimulated my thinking as well. Now here is an example : my elder brother commanded a great deal of respect among Kashmiris as my father had before him. During his youth rationing was introduced in some parts of Kashmir. A Kashmiri Brahmin acting as Rationing Inspector visited our locality to enforce rationing. All sorts of people gathered around him out of curiosity and my elder brother was among them. He called for the head of the locality and when the man approached, the Inspector slapped his face. Of course it was a common event for a government officer to abuse and insult people in Kashmir to create an impression of authority—and usually the person with the most respect and admiration in the area was the one to be most heavily insulted.

When the head of the locality was thus ill-treated, my brother became very incensed and questioned the propriety of the Inspector's behaviour. The Inspector, seeing that the situation might turn ugly, apologized and the matter ended there. But the incident led me to think about the lot of the poor people in Kashmir when the junior officials and local leaders were treated in such a fashion. It was incidents like this that stirred me to seek a redress of tyranny and injustice.

Q. But when you were young—say in school—did you make any attempts to improve conditions of the people you knew ?

A. As a school student I joined and started leading students' organizations. At Aligarh University, too, I took an active part in the activities of the students.

Q. What hobbies have you developed ?

A. Gardening is one of my main hobbies and I am fond of reading books. However, my greatest interest lies with the masses and their problems. I am interested in observing the life of the common man and it is my life's mission to uphold the cause of the down-trodden. I want to devote my entire life to the cause of the common man.

Q. After your studies what profession did you want to enter ?

A. I had decided while I was still a student that I wanted to enter politics but before doing so I wanted to prepare myself thoroughly for the hard life of a politician. It became my firm conviction that my people have the right to live an honourable life and until they achieved their freedom, I could not sit in peace. My mind had already reacted strongly against political conditions in Kashmir: the Kashmiris were hated everywhere and looked upon as liars and cowards. The condition of the Kashmiri labourers was the worst as they had been very badly exploited. Whenever I think of their poverty I boil within. I want to bring about a revolution in the life of every Kashmiri—I want to change his entire life. If I cannot do that I shall prefer death for myself because I feel it is better to die than to live in disgrace.

(I had not expected Sheikh Abdullah to react so vehemently to what I considered a relatively harmless question. Nonetheless, I attempted to lower the pitch of the conversation by asking a few somewhat mundane questions.)

Q. And about your marriage, Sheikh Abdullah? Can you tell us something about your wife?

A. I was married in 1932. My wife was a Muslim even before our marriage. Her father, Mr. Needou, had embraced Islam and was running an exclusive hotel in Srinagar. His Islamic name was Sheikh Ahmed Hussain. One of his cousins had also embraced Islam and had married a Muslim lady. I have three sons and two daughters. My wife has always shared the joys, sorrows and the ups and downs of my life and has inspired me even in my most difficult days.

Q. What would you say is the present position of the Urdu language?

A. Firstly, the question of language should not be viewed from a religious angle. Language knows no barriers of religion or nation. Urdu must not be considered the language of Muslims alone—Muslims of other countries do not speak Urdu and yet many non-Muslims of India do!

The British, following the policy of divide and rule, created a language problem here. As a direct consequence, Hindus called Urdu the language of the Muslims and Muslims called

Hindi the language of the Hindus—and this is absolutely wrong. Abdur Rahim Khan-e-Khanan was a Hindi poet. On the other hand, Daya Shanker Nasim wrote Urdu poetry all his life. If Urdu was the language of Muslims alone, Brij Narain Chakbast, Ratan Nath Sarshar, Prem Chand, Tej Bahadur Sapru, Raghupati Sahai Firaq and Krishna Chandra would be writing in Hindi.

The case of Kashmir bears out my contention. Pali is spoken in a number of parts of Kashmir and the Pali script is also used. Pali had its origin in Sanskrit. With the diffusion of the Buddhist religion, Pali came to Kashmir and took hold there. Then came Islam and Persian spread as a popular language throughout Kashmir to the extent that Kashmiri Brahmins became renowned Persian scholars. Urdu became popular in Kashmir at a later stage but Kashmir itself has no linguistic prejudices.

Q. Is it true that you do not call yourself an Indian citizen ?

A. From the constitutional point of view I have accepted the citizenship of India temporarily but the final decision will be taken later. It is not a question of my citizenship alone but that of fifty lakhs of Kashmiris. Being a Muslim I should be a world citizen because Islam is an international religion. A Muslim cannot be tied to boundaries. It is unfortunate that Muslims have divided themselves into Pathans, Mughals, *Sayyids* and so on. Of course, in the past people took ancestral names for the sake of nomenclature. However, all Muslims are brothers and cannot be excluded from the circle of brotherhood.

It is not my purpose to confuse the question of citizenship. I only want to pull down the imaginary walls of hatred. I love every Indian ; yet, to love India does not mean that Pakistan must be hated. My main mission is to bring India and Pakistan together and my citizenship has no bearing on my mission. But if we Kashmiris for any reason accept the idea that we are Indian citizens then there is no basis to our argument. Your own labelling us as Indian citizens will not determine our citizenship. The world must also recognize the Kashmiris as Indian citizens.

All sorts of suspicions and conjectures are formed about my citizenship. I say, for God's sake, give me more freedom and trust me. I will be the last man to jeopardize the honour and self-respect of India. The freedom of India is my freedom. But if you do not trust me and insist that I declare my citizenship, then I say call me a citizen of undivided India including India and Pakistan.

Q. But do you regard India as your homeland ?

A. This should prove the point : in 1965 when I was on my pilgrimage to Mecca, the Indian papers started writing very unfavourable things about me. Several Muslim countries offered me asylum but I refused these offers and returned to India before the expiration date of my passport—but of course I was arrested then—which was no surprise to me !

But my record is clean in this respect. I have been labelled as Pakistan's enemy number one : when Pakistan tried to occupy Kashmir by force, I was the first man to lead the resistance against Pakistan. Give me more freedom—I shall not jeopardize the grandeur of India.

Q. In your opinion, is the Government of India sympathetic to the people of Kashmir ?

A. Since 1953, I have felt that the people of Kashmir do not enjoy the confidence of Indian leaders. They are regarded with suspicion. The people of Kashmir do not ask for anything impossible : they want only protection from their elder brother, India. I am a friend of India and to prove my contention, in a convention of Muslim countries, instead of supporting Pakistan on the question of minorities, I sided with India.

Q. Generally speaking, how do people react to your long and so far frustrating search for "what you term freedom" in Kashmir ?

A. People taunt me about the way I am treated, about my dreams of democracy and about my faith in constitutional government. I have no reply to these taunts but I still think I am right. I still have perseverance and I have no hesitation in stating that in spite of the way I am treated, the Hindus have an affection for me. Was not Madan Lal a Hindu ? And did he not give shelter to my family during my internment ?

People warn me not to trust India but until I am disillusioned, I will not heed their warning. I had talked at length to Mr. Jinnah on the two-nation theory and I emphasised that until I was convinced of its wisdom, I would not agree with him. Mr. Jinnah replied that he was advising me in the capacity of a father and that if I did not listen to him, I would regret my decision. I insisted that I would see my own conviction through. I believed then and I still do that fear and cowardice smother man's abilities. One must have and exhibit the courage of one's conviction.

Q. Do you accept Kashmir as an integral part of India ?

A. We are no doubt a part of the undivided Indian sub-continent which is the only correct geographical designation !

Q. Do you consider the Pakistani occupied part of Kashmir an integral part of Pakistan ?

A. No, by no means. The Pakistan-occupied part of Kashmir belongs to Kashmir and not to Pakistan. When I talk of Kashmir, I mean the undivided Kashmir before 1947.

And my advice to the people of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir is that they should press Pakistan for the restoration of their rights just as I am trying to restore the rights of the rest of the Kashmiris. And I reject out of hand the suggestion that someone made recently that the leaders of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir should get together with the leaders of Indian occupied Kashmir.

My whole point is that the right of self-determination applies equally to Kashmiris on both sides of the Ceasefire Line and until that right is granted by both India and Pakistan, justice cannot be done in Kashmir.

Q. Sheikh Saheb, it is felt by most Indians that Kashmiris in Kashmir have the same rights as do Indians in India. Is this correct ?

A. I myself *want* the Kashmiris to have the same rights as Indians but the fact is that the democratic process stops somewhere near Pathankot. Between Pathankot and the Banihal Pass you find only a shadow of these rights and after Banihal you do not find even a semblance of them ! Would you believe that in Kashmir our existence depends on the good

or bad behaviour of petty police officials ? Nobody can express his views frankly. Today Kashmiris say that if our leader, Sheikh Abdullah, could be imprisoned for fourteen years, how can we expect better treatment ? We chose to develop good relations with India not because of her wealth but because of our admiration for her democratic principles.

But instead of giving examples from Kashmir, I can cite my own example. Here they have freed me—but in the matter of expressing my opinion, I am restricted. Look what happened this month in Meerut. The Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh sent orders to all the District Magistrates saying that if by my speeches there would be any chance of a breach of the peace, I should not be allowed to speak in public. The Chief Minister made no attempt to know who actually was behind the disturbances. I spoke at Meerut for about two and a half hours and in my speech I emphasised only the need for communal harmony. Should a Chief Minister of a state in a democratic country adopt this attitude towards a free citizen ? If this is your democracy, do you expect the Kashmiri people to praise it ? I agree that India can continue its hold on Kashmir on the basis of its armed strength but you then have your hold on the bodies only—not the souls. This cannot be called a true accession—accession can only be attained by trust and friendship.

Q. Kashmiris have been following your speeches and statements carefully since your release this month. Do you find any change in their opinions ? Are they still keenly interested in your views ?

A. I find the great mass of Kashmiris favour my views because they are so exasperated by dishonest leaders who toy with their interests and needs. Of course, there is a group of conspirators and agitators which instigates disturbances and tries to decry my efforts. And while this group certainly does not have influence over the whole of Kashmir or even much of India, news of their activities has spread in Kashmir and can be very harmful.

Q. Have you made any changes in your positions since your release ?

A. I am not rigid about my positions. If any one can convince me that my demands are injurious to the interests of the people of India, Pakistan and Kashmir, I will be only too glad to modify them.

Q. Do you fear that you will be arrested again ?

A. I don't know—only God knows ! I have to do my duty and as long as God wants me to remain free, I shall be free. I do my duty according to the will of God. I have a strong faith that man can do nothing unless God wills it and to whatever place He sends me, I go willingly.

Q. Of the three Prime Ministers of India, Nehru, Shastri and Mrs. Gandhi, which one have you preferred as Prime Minister ?

A. (With a gentle laugh, Sheikh Abdullah replied :) How can I compare the three Prime Ministers ? Indiraji is like a bud in the political field. I cannot and will not compare them.

Q. How are your personal relations with Mrs. Gandhi in comparison to your relations with her father ?

A. Indiraji is the daughter of Pandit Nehru and my personal relations with Pandit Nehru were deep and strong. She knows that, of course, but the position and influence that Pandit Nehru wielded are difficult for her to grasp in so short a time. Indiraji is like a bud—it will take time for her to mature. It is our duty to nurture this bud carefully so that it may blossom. Does she not have Nehru's blood running through her veins ?

Q. When did you meet Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Nehru for the first time ? What were your initial impressions ?

A. I met Pandit Nehru for the first time at the Lahore Railway Station after his visit with Mian Iftikharuddin Khan. He was setting out on a tour of the North West Frontier. It must have been 1937 or 1938. I talked to him at the railway station for a while and became so fascinated with him that I boarded his compartment and toured the whole of the North West Frontier with him.

During our tour we exchanged ideas on all kinds of subjects of mutual interest. He suggested opening the Kashmir Muslim

Conference to non-Muslims as well. When I expressed doubt about it, he explained that by opening the membership to all, my campaign against the ruler would gain more strength. Each time we met thereafter our friendship grew stronger but it was the first meeting that I remember most vividly.

When I first met Mahatma Gandhi, I judged him to be a leader of the highest ideals and very clear in his objectives. I was drawn to him by his honesty and his love of the truth. He accepted his errors openly and never asked anyone to do something he himself would not do.

Q. I know you seek to improve relations between India and Pakistan—but do you think you can also improve relations between India and China in any way ?

A. India has friendly relations with all countries of the world. Pakistan is our next door neighbour. So is China. When we can befriend the Soviet Union and the United States, why can't we befriend our next door neighbours ?

Q. Can you tell me who were the people behind the theft of the Prophet's Hair ?

A. I cannot lay the responsibility on any one because I did not personally witness the incident. It would be a sin if I laid responsibility on someone on the basis of conjecture but as far I know this is the story :

One night the sacred hair was declared stolen. Riots started immediately and armed police were posted all around the sacred shrine. A wave of anger overtook the Muslims of Kashmir.

All of a sudden, there was an announcement that the sacred hair had been found although no one saw any one putting it back in its place. There is certainly something strange about the situation—no one knows who the thief was, what his motive was or why he returned the sacred hair when he did. One can only guess who the culprit may have been since the government bungled badly, in this case as in many others that it handled.

You see, in Kashmir there are two important Muslim centres : *Mujahed Manzil*, a political centre which has now been des-

troyed, and *Hazrat Bal*, where the sacred hair of the Prophet is preserved. On the night of *Meraj Sharif*, lakhs of people gather there. At the time of *Milad-ul-Nabi* as well, there is a large gathering. The birthdays of the four Caliphs are also celebrated at this place. This area, then, has special importance to the Muslims of the Valley and it is just possible that there may have been a conspiracy to destroy it. After the return of the sacred hair Maulana Masoodi confirmed that it was the same hair which had been stolen. Others also testified to the fact that it was the same hair.

Q. What are your relations with Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed?

A. There is no point discussing my past relations with Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed. A man who works in the name of God has no time to think of personalities. My relations with Bakshi Saheb are as good as with other people. There was a time when he was my closest colleague. However, his views changed and he started decrying my policies.

It is only recently that Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed has realized that perhaps my way of thinking was right. My victory lies in the fact that Bakshi Saheb now considers me to be the true deliverer of Kashmir.

Q. Is it true that you refused to meet some Kashmiri Brahmins who came to see you? (This was reported in a newspaper and I wanted to clarify it.)

A. The news that was circulated was absolutely false! Why would I refuse to meet a person who comes to see me when I do not believe in taking revenge on anyone? When I was in power as Prime Minister of Kashmir, I never took revenge against anyone. That was a time when my adversaries feared me but when I discovered their fears, I called them and told them not to fear Abdullah. It has always been my practice to pardon my enemies.

Q. When you were President of the National Conference in Kashmir, how did you happen to become a member of the State Congress Party?

A. At one point I decided to visit other states in India and chose Hyderabad for a visit; but I came away feeling that in

Hyderabad as in Kashmir a great injustice was being done to the people by the ruler. In Kashmir, the ruler was a Hindu and the vast majority of the population was Muslim while in Hyderabad the ruler was a Muslim and the population was predominantly Hindu. In both cases the rulers were not looking after the needs of the people. It was not a question of Hindu versus Muslim—but of the exploiter versus the exploited. In both cases the masses needed care and concern. So I decided to join the State Congress and become part of the national organization to help promote the interests of the people in all areas of India.

Q. What was the purpose of Mr. Jinnah's visit to Kashmir in 1945 ?

A. Mr. Jinnah wanted me again to transform the National Conference into the Muslim Conference—but I refused to do this. Generally, he felt that the right of accession lay with the ruler and not with the people of Kashmir so you see that we disagreed on basic points.

Q. Do you really think it would be possible for India and Pakistan to establish good relations ?

A. People tell me that Pakistan cannot be a friend of India's because its very establishment is based on hatred of India. I maintain that this is not so. India and Pakistan can be compared to brothers who, after a misunderstanding, decided to partition their house. It was the duty of the Hindus of India to dispel the fears of the minorities—it was on the basis of those fears that Pakistan was originally created. If we had treated the Muslims well and had restored their confidence, Pakistan would have realised its mistake and the wall of hatred between the two countries would have disintegrated. The Hindus must realise why Mr. Jinnah and other Muslim leaders adopted the course they did. Today when people ask me if this is the India of my dreams, I feel ashamed and cannot answer.

Q. But how can we bring about unity and cooperation between India and Pakistan ?

A. To bring about unity and cooperation between India and Pakistan, the economic problems of both countries should

be enumerated and tackled through trade agreements, by establishing travel facilities between the two countries and agreement on other relevant points. The two countries should shape their policies in a manner which will encourage these objectives and allow practical steps to be taken to implement them. Both countries will have to work with patience, mutual faith and constant effort. If we do not act now to improve the situation, the next generation will never forgive us.

The peace agreement at Tashkent can be made meaningful only if some solid steps are taken now. The stumbling block between the two countries—on which the Security Council and the Soviet Union had to intervene—still exists. The Kashmir question must be settled once and for all before either country can live in peace and progress.

(Here I include the text of a speech that Sheikh Abdullah gave in Deoband on January 28 in which he elaborated his views of Indo-Pak relations :)

Thousands of people have laid down their lives for the freedom of the country and they have cried themselves hoarse shouting "Independence for India!" But the dreams of freedom we saw before Independence do not seem to be coming true. It is a tragedy of circumstances that the two brothers fought the battle for freedom together but fell out on attaining it and the country was partitioned.

The fate of Kashmir was left undecided. Pakistan claimed the state but we Kashmiris told Pakistan that the future of Kashmir would be decided by the people of Kashmir themselves. This problem developed into a malignant boil and in 1965 the two brothers were again embroiled in war. Crores of rupees were wasted but we still stand where we have always stood.

Look at the unenviable position of Kashmir : towards the west stands Pakistan and towards the east, India. The only way to save Kashmir, India and Pakistan is to create a strong bond of friendship and mutual love—but there are people who do not allow a favourable atmosphere to develop. The masters of our destiny are more concerned about keeping their jobs and positions and spare little time to see that the masses have bread to eat.

I appeal to the people who instigate our young men for their own purposes to think deliberately about the after-effects of this bitterness on the progress of the country. You should direct your energies to our problems and search for a solution rather than wasting your time on disputes and demonstrations.

(Sheikh Abdullah spoke at length at Deoband and on many topics but my interview continues here on the same issue for some time.)

Q. What about the necessity of establishing diplomatic relations between India and Pakistan ?

A. It is regrettable that India and Pakistan have asked each other's representatives to leave. These things happen only when there is mutual distrust and in this case, especially, it is very unfortunate.

Q. Will the expulsion of diplomatic representatives have any adverse effect on your visit to Pakistan ?

A. No, it will have no adverse effect on my personal visit but such developments will certainly affect the relations of the two countries adversely.

Q. Had you not been arrested in 1965 do you think that you could have averted the war between India and Pakistan ?

A. I cannot claim that : but if I had not been in jail I would have done my best to temper the conditions leading to the conflict.

Q. After your release from jail in 1964, you did make a serious attempt to establish good relations between India and Pakistan and to solve the Kashmir problem. What happened in Delhi when you visited Prime Minister Nehru in 1964 ?

A. I had been released from jail by the Sadiq government in Kashmir on the advice of the Government of India. Then Pandit Nehru invited me to come to Delhi in April 1964 and stay with him as his guest. After that long and cordial visit, I issued a statement upon my return to Kashmir. If I can find a copy, I will give it to you.

(Sheikh Abdullah ruffled through a large folder and finally brought out the following :)

On the cordial invitation of Prime Minister Nehru, I went to Delhi and had an opportunity to meet and exchange ideas with Cabinet Ministers and leaders of different shades of opinion, among

them, Acharya Bhave, Jai Prakash Narain and Rajagopalachari. I talked with the President and Vice President as well. After many days of meetings, I realized that all these leaders feel the necessity of establishing lasting and friendly relations between India and Pakistan. It is also generally agreed that for a permanent solution to the Kashmir question, the consensus of both India and Pakistan is necessary. The delay in settling the issue is hampering political, economic and moral progress of the people of Kashmir. The clouds of mal-administration and insecurity continue to hover over Kashmir.

The strained relations between India and Pakistan are a source of constant tension which sometimes takes the form of brute violence. The minorities of both nations live in an atmosphere of fear, uncomfortable in their own countries. If the tension between India and Pakistan is not checked and relations are not improved, there is the risk that a huge conflagration will erupt disturbing the balance of power in Asia.

It is the duty of the leaders of both countries to prevent relations from deteriorating any further. They must find ways by which a lasting friendship may be established and we have to concentrate all our energies to achieve this objective and to check any disruptive force. The solution which ultimately has to be found must satisfy India and Pakistan as well as Kashmir. This is of course likely to take some time to achieve especially when the leaders of Kashmir have not yet been consulted. We are considering now some possibilities and it is hoped that a satisfactory solution will be forthcoming. Let us hope the press will cooperate with us in promoting an atmosphere of understanding and friendship. I hope too that I will be able to go to Pakistan to consult President Ayub Khan and other leaders on the settlement of some points which continue to create tension between India and Pakistan.

Q. What change did you find in Prime Minister Nehru during your visit with him in 1964 ?

A. A remarkable change had taken place in Pandit Nehru and I found him a very different man. He had realised that there was a wide gap between the problems of the people and his ability to solve them. When I met him last, he was greatly moved by the events in East Pakistan and the disturbances in Calcutta. He had begun to realise that he had little time left and that he would be leaving a lot of unsolved problems for his successors. He spoke to me very frankly and expressed his desire to resolve the Kashmir problem. I tried to help but Pandit Nehru died suddenly and his work remained unfinished.

(I was somewhat embarrassed to note that as Sheikh Abdullah spoke of Nehru he became visibly saddened. His voice was low and heavy and he did not look at me as he spoke. I tried thereafter to be more careful in the questions I framed and immediately turned the discussion to a less emotional subject.)

Q. What was the purpose of your visit to President Ayub Khan in 1964 ? Was it to solve the Kashmir problem or to resolve other differences between India and Pakistan and thus to create a favourable atmosphere for future talks ?

A. The purpose of my visit was mainly to find a solution to the Kashmir problem as both Pandit Nehru and I agreed that good relations between India and Pakistan were inhibited by the Kashmir question. If this problem could be solved, all other differences between India and Pakistan could also be settled. After my release in 1964, when I made efforts to tackle the problem, I found some change in the diplomatic atmosphere : President Ayub Khan did not consider India sincere.

I proposed to President Ayub that India and Pakistan should make a concerted effort to resolve their differences but President Ayub said that he was not sure if Pandit Nehru would agree to act on a common solution. I assured him that Pandit Nehru was sincere and further reminded him that it was time that India and Pakistan went ahead with solving their problems in a brotherly spirit. I admit that at the time a way could not be found but I am sure if Pandit Nehru had lived an honourable course would have opened.

Q. But the year after all these conciliatory talks the Indo-Pak conflict started—why ?

A. The war erupted in 1965 because Pandit Nehru's solutions were not given a try and the Kashmir problem became more and more involved. But I am sure that if I could have continued my efforts for a settlement things would have turned out better.

Q. Do you think that President Ayub sincerely desired a solution to the Kashmir problem ?

A. I talked to President Ayub in a frank and friendly way. I had nearly succeeded in my mission by convincing him of Pandit Nehru's sincerity and good intentions when Pandit Nehru's untimely death ended all discussions.

Q. Did Mr. Bhutto try to sabotage your talks with President Ayub in any way ?

A. No, Mr. Bhutto did not interfere. He is young and spirited but less experienced than President Ayub. The difference between the two is mainly that of age and experience.

Q. What is your opinion of President Ayub's book, *"Friends Not Masters"* ?

A. President Ayub, in his book, has expressed his personal opinion about many things. I agree in some cases and disagree in others. He has written about me but I feel that he misunderstood me. I later stated my views in clear terms so that the misunderstanding may be cleared up. This is the letter I had written to President Ayub after reading his book.

(Again, Sheikh Abdullah produced, this time from another file, a copy of his earlier correspondence with President Ayub Khan.)

In the name of God, most Gracious, most Merciful.

C/O Deputy Commissioner,
Delhi, 1st September, 1967.

My dear Khan Saheb ,

May peace and blessings of Allah be upon you.

While giving your views on Confederation in your book, *"Friends Not Masters"*, you have, among other things, said :

"When Sheikh Abdullah and Mirza Mohd. Afzal Beg came to Pakistan in 1964, they too had brought the absurd proposal of confederation between India, Pakistan and Kashmir. I told them plainly we should have nothing to do with it. It was curious that whereas we were seeking the salvation of Kashmiris, they had been forced to mention an idea which, if pursued, would lead to our enslavement. It was clear that this was what Mr. Nehru had told them to say to us. I do not blame them, because they were obviously acting under the compulsion of circumstances. But they left me in no doubt that their future was linked with Pakistan."

In order to keep the record straight, I would request you to refresh your memory as to what actually I told you when I met you along with Mirza Afzal Beg, for I find certain discrepancies in your statement above.

We never carried with us any cut and dry proposals for the solution of the Kashmir dispute and, to be fair to the late Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, he never forced us to put before you any

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particular proposal. No, we are not made that way. My sole purpose in visiting Pakistan and meeting you was to persuade you to agree to a summit meeting with the Prime Minister of India, so that a solution acceptable to all concerned could be found at a conference table. When asked if I had any specific solution in my mind, I told you clearly that I had none, except the one that emanated from the United Nations, to which both India and Pakistan agreed. Incidentally, I referred to a number of other possible solutions suggested, from time to time, by various people and friendly countries. It was in this sequence that confederation between India, Pakistan and Kashmir was mentioned by me, as it was also being suggested as one of the possible solutions. Of course this proposal was vehemently denounced by you. Such a solution, you felt, would encourage forces of disintegration, not only in Pakistan, but more so in India. My advice to you, however, was not to reject any proposal outright, but to discuss its pros and cons in a friendly manner at the conference table and convince the other side that a particular solution would not lead to ultimate peace which ought to be the common objective of all. My whole emphasis was that parties must give up their rigid attitudes and be prepared to listen to the viewpoint of the other side without attributing motives.

Both India and Pakistan had, unfortunately, got too much involved in this dispute, and, therefore, such a solution only must emerge from the conference table, which the parties could present to their respective people as the only practical, honourable and just solution under the prevailing circumstances. None should leave the conference table with a sense of defeat.

You were kind enough to agree to come to Delhi and meet late Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru but, to our misfortune, his sad and untimely death robbed us of this opportunity.

I hope you are doing well.

With kind regards.

Yours sincerely,
(Sd. Sheikh Abdullah)

Q. Have you been in correspondence with President Ayub lately ?

A. The day before the Pakistani High Commissioner, Mr. Arshad Hussain, was to leave, I paid a return visit to him and sent a message to President Ayub through him. I advised the President of Pakistan not to take any steps in the Security Council which might increase tension between the two countries and which might adversely affect my own efforts to bring about amity between the two countries. I felt that it was acceptable for me to sound President Ayub out in the matter

because any discussion of these issues in the Security Council could only further complicate matters.

I deeply regret, however, that my message to President Ayub has been very badly misconstrued. It seems that the Pakistan High Commissioner added a few points himself: I never thanked President Ayub for supporting the right of self-determination of the Kashmiri masses. These are words added by the High Commissioner, Mr. Arshad Hussain. Nonetheless, the message contained nothing objectionable.

Q. What is the future of Kashmir ?

A. I have often been asked about the future of Kashmir. I see it in a very practical way. The country has already been partitioned and partition is certainly a reality. The Kashmiris have to consider where their future lies. I want to adopt a course in which friendship between Kashmir and India will not lead to enmity between Kashmir and Pakistan and where friendship between Kashmir and Pakistan will not lead to enmity between Kashmir and India. I maintain that the final decision on the future of Kashmir will lie with the people of Kashmir. I would not like to be hurried into a decision nor would they.

Q. But what type of solution do you want for the Kashmir problem ?

A. I want India and Pakistan to develop friendly relations and I want a solution of the Kashmir issue against that background. Such a solution must also be acceptable to the Kashmiri people themselves. You cannot build a strong house without digging the foundation deep enough ; only a strong foundation can guarantee a durable building. You see, the problem rests on a few basic points :

One has to accept the fact that the Kashmir problem is the main issue responsible for the strained relations between India and Pakistan. The last war between India and Pakistan was fought on this issue and the problem had to be referred to the United Nations. Both India and Pakistan claim Kashmir but it must be realized that Kashmir belongs to neither India nor Pakistan but to the Kashmiris who reside in Kashmir. Kashmir is inhabited by fifty lakhs of people who have their own goals in life and can be neither owned nor bartered away by outside powers.

I understand the anxiety of India and Pakistan to have a foothold in Kashmir but can the matter be settled only by having a strong desire to own Kashmir ?

Kashmir is like a beautiful woman who has two suitors, each a neighbour and each anxious to marry her. Both are so love-stricken that they are willing to battle for her and, as a result, tension mounts in the neighbourhood and the woman herself is deeply affected. Her suitors seem to have no regard for her pitiful condition, even though they themselves suffer tremendously for her sake.

The Kashmiri people would like to have intimate relations with both suitors—India and Pakistan. But a woman cannot be a wife to two men at the same time. Kashmir is in the same position and is having trouble keeping the two suitors in a good mood.

Due to the strained relations between the two countries, there is a setback in the trade and commerce of Kashmir. This has an adverse effect on tourism which should bring a lot of revenue to Kashmir. No capitalist wants to make a large investment in Kashmir because of the uncertainties of the future. I have considered the situation seriously as have Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed and Ghulam Sadiq and they agree with me that tension between India and Pakistan must be removed at the earliest.

Have you ever observed a fight between two elephants ? The grass under their feet gets badly trampled. In this case, if the grass is to be preserved, you will have to bring about peace between the two neighbours.

Although India and Pakistan are neighbours having strong ties and depending upon each other for many things, there is no harmony. One looks towards the west and the other towards the east when they should look to a common place for mutual benefit. The economic problems of the two countries are interrelated : if the rivers of Pakistan are in spate, the rivers of India will also swell, if the locusts invade Pakistan they are bound to be a menace to India also. The future of both countries lies in mutual cooperation and mutual assistance.

We have attained freedom but instead of enjoying this freedom, both countries have become economic slaves to foreign powers. Tremendous sums of money are spent on armaments but two years later the ammunition and armaments become obsolete—is that not a waste of national wealth? The defence budget of India a few years ago was only two hundred crores of rupees but now it is one thousand crores. The country is weak economically and politically and we depend on foreign capitalists for our economic development.

Our primary need is to supplant hatred and mistrust with friendship and confidence. India and Pakistan have been partitioned by drawing a line and the line has developed into a wall but this wall should not separate our hearts. Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Nehru and Lal Bahadur Shastri earnestly desired amity between the countries and the Tashkent agreement is a shining example of the possibility of that friendship and cooperation.

You know, in these conflicts between India and Pakistan, thousands of people have been killed, thousands of women have become widows and so many children orphans. The only son of a friend of mine, General Tara Singh, was killed in the last war. I felt that my own son had perished. The daughter of my friend, Tej Ram Kashmiri, was married only eight days before the war. The new husband was killed in the fighting and I feel that my own daughter has been widowed. Thousands of examples can be cited of the numerous young men who have been lost in these senseless slaughters.

During the Second World War we used to criticise the British for using our young men as cannon fodder. What are we ourselves doing today? Are we not sacrificing our best manpower to satisfy a power lust? I will not name them but some statesmen do talk most irresponsibly and it is their inflammatory speeches that have caused thousands of such deaths.

There is no end to the atrocities of war. During my premiership of Kashmir, I rehabilitated a number of homeless, destitute people in Chhamb. I gave them shelter and employment but after a few years, when they had just begun to stand on their feet, their homes were destroyed and they were again uprooted. Do you think I am not pained at these incidents?

There are so many people who shout war slogans ! During Pandit Nehru's life-time these slogans were ineffective but soon after his death war between India and Pakistan became inevitable. Neither country gained anything in the conflict. I had warned the slogan-mongers to weigh the consequences of war before resorting to it and even now I say let us work for an atmosphere of friendship and goodwill. I ask you, how can a man who shouts slogans of war be a friend of either India or Pakistan ?

You have asked me for a solution to the Kashmir problem. And my reply is : without determining the basis of the problem, you cannot arrive at a solution. As long as our hearts are not free of hatred and as long as we cannot gauge the consequences of conflict, the Kashmir problem will not be solved. There must be a strong desire for a solution and an honest attempt to know the needs and wishes of the other party. Let all those who sincerely desire to solve the problem sit in a round table discussion and come to terms. People ask me again and again for the practical solution of the problem and I tell them repeatedly that good seed is not sown on fallow land. I have the precious seed with me but you must show me suitable land for sowing. And you cannot raise a good crop by sitting in your drawing room. For practical results, you have to come out in the open field. We have failed so far because we are trying to solve the problem as armchair politicians when a lot of plowing and practical work is needed.

This is not the time to discuss it but I shall take a step forward and say that the matter can be settled through a plebiscite if there is a general agreement on it.

Q. But as far as you know, what kind of solution does India want ?

A. After meeting with Acharya Kripalani, Jai Prakash Narain and other leaders, I have arrived at the conclusion that the people of India in general want a constitutional solution to the Kashmir problem. But Jai Prakash Narain, at least, thinks that the most important thing is to satisfy the Kashmiri masses.

Q. Would a round table conference between the Prime Minister of India and the Chief Minister, Mr. Sadiq, be acceptable to you ?

A. Mr. Sadiq has absolutely no following in Kashmir nor has he any effective battalion of workers with him. However, a solution of the Kashmir problem acceptable to the Kashmiri masses and people in general would influence Pakistan to accept it, too.

Q. In your travels abroad, have you talked to any foreign leaders about the Kashmir problem ?

A. While on my pilgrimage, I had the opportunity to meet and talk with some political leaders of the Muslim countries of the Middle East. I also met some non-Muslim statesmen in London. All of them shared my feeling that India and Pakistan should establish friendly relations with each other. Gamel Abdul Nasser and King Faisal went to the extent of saying that the strained relations of the two countries were harming even the nations of the Middle East.

I do not know if President Nasser actually offered himself as an arbitrator between India and Pakistan but I know for certain that he earnestly wishes that the problem of Kashmir should be solved quickly. He is genuinely interested in the affairs of these two countries and he appreciates the problems of newly independent nations.

Wherever I went I found that world opinion is in favour of good relations and unity of purpose between India and Pakistan. Everyone strongly believes that the people of this area, Kashmir especially, cannot be denied their right of self-determination.

Q. There has been talk about the possibility of international control of Kashmir which would include joint control by India and Pakistan and Kashmir's right to govern herself independently in internal affairs. Do you subscribe to this policy ?

A. No. I have not suggested such a plan. However, it is equally incorrect to suggest that I have said that Pakistan should have nothing to do with the solving of the Kashmir problem. Even complete freedom is not the proper solution but when we sit together and discuss the matter openly and are prepared for mutual give and take, something will be forthcoming.

The leadership in India has shut itself in an enclosure. Only a plebiscite can force that leadership out of its shell and make India agree to a solution of the Kashmir problem.

Q. Do you think that any outside agency would be able to find a solution ?

A. I have declared to the whole world that no one but the Kashmiris has any right to decide the Kashmir question. The right of accession lies with the people of Kashmir and not with the ruler. We are not yet free from the dominating influence of the ruler and we must be free to exercise our choice.

Kashmiris have been ill-treated and tyrannized by every ruler whether Hindu, Muslim or Dogra. They have humiliated Kashmiri women for their pleasure and usurped the property of Kashmiris for their own use. From the beginning of my political life I have said clearly that Kashmiris would prefer death to a life of subjugation, dishonour and humiliation. Until this day, Kashmiris have not been treated as human beings ; and now that the time for self-determination has come, it is for the Kashmiris to decide their own fate and no outside agency can interfere.

Q. Would you like to become Chief Minister of Kashmir again ?

A. No, because only that person who enjoys the confidence of the Government of India can be the Chief Minister of Kashmir. I am not in favour of complete independence for Kashmir either, because Kashmir cannot defend itself.

(And, in a lighter mood, he continued :)

You offer me the Chief Ministership of Kashmir. Some people have offered me the Prime Ministership of India but the Chief Ministership and Prime Ministership are not ends in themselves. Problems cannot be solved by accepting positions but only by executing them.

Q. Do you still uphold the plan for a new Kashmir that you outlined while you were the leader of the National Conference of Kashmir ?

A. To stop all exploitation of Kashmir in economic, political and social spheres is the aim and objective of my plan for a new Kashmir and I have full faith in the plan. A man would not like to desert his life's principles, would he ?

Q. Would you be in favour of the partition of Jammu and Kashmir ?

A. The Maharaja of Kashmir once had the idea of partitioning Jammu but I told him he should first ascertain the feelings of the population before embarking upon such a plan. The Muslim population of Jammu has decreased considerably as many were killed and quite a few migrated. There are hardly two thousand Muslims in Jammu now. Actually this part of the country from Kangra to Himachal Pradesh was predominantly inhabited by Dogras. From the point of view of trade and commerce, these areas are closely connected. In Kathua and Ranbirpura, there was a predominance of Muslims but after the slaughter the Muslims migrated. In the same way the Hindus of Mirpur have migrated. Now armies guard the boundary and trade, commerce and traffic are at a standstill. I am saddened to see this state of affairs in Kashmir and I sometimes search for the Kashmir of my dreams. Where shall I find it ?

Q. You met with Mrs. Gandhi a few days ago (January 20) and the newspaper reports indicated that she is not willing to let you visit Pakistan again now as she feels the "climate" is not right for such a visit. What do you think about your talks with her ?

A. Well, I was a bit disappointed, of course. The meeting was not very fruitful although it lasted about two hours. I thought that Mrs. Gandhi would give the details of our talks when she met the press in the evening but she was not very communicative to them—or to me during our meeting.

I am worried about the possible solution of the Kashmir issue—more worried than I was before our meeting. I had hoped to get some clarification on the Prime Minister's points for negotiation but she was reluctant to discuss the subject.

Q. Do you still want to go to Pakistan ?

A. You see, a second visit to Pakistan depends on my finding that such a visit would be useful in some way.

Q. In your meetings with Mr. Arshad Hussain, the Pakistan High Commissioner, did you discuss your proposed visit to Pakistan ?

A. I met Mr. Hussain twice but I didn't talk with him about visiting Pakistan. Naturally he will welcome my visit and he has assured me that Pakistan will not take any steps which may further strain relations between India and Pakistan. I shall go to Pakistan only when I am convinced that I will be able to play a constructive role in bringing peace to the two countries. I would like to know the attitudes of the Indian government and its reaction to my proposed visit for only if there is some basis of compromise can my visit be worthwhile.

Q. Do you think that the people of Pakistan are looking forward to your visit ?

A. Yes and I want them to trust me fully. The suspicions which have grown about me in India must be put to rest. I fervently hope that a lasting friendship will develop between India and Pakistan and that India will begin to treat me as a friend. I know that I enjoyed the full confidence of Pandit Nehru—he was my strength but that strength is no longer with me...

I certainly regret the attitude of some of my friends. When I left India they carried on a nasty propaganda campaign against me. When I returned without giving me an opportunity to explain myself, they arrested me and sent me two thousand miles away from Delhi.

Q. Would you give me the details of that arrest ?

A. I had a legal passport and I went abroad on a pilgrimage, but during my absence I was much maligned in India. When I returned, I was arrested at Palam Airport without the least opportunity to explain myself or my activities.

How tragic it is that the assassin of an august person like Gandhiji was given all the facilities of defence in various courts, but I was denied all opportunity to defend myself.

I was not even charged in a court of law. But still I do not complain. The Kashmir problem has become a matter of even greater concern. We have to reassure fifty lakhs of people in Jammu and Kashmir about their future. If you threaten them with an unacceptable solution, they will not yield. Trust me—trust my Kashmiri people and let us work for a solution. My voice is the voice of truth and will not be suppressed.

ON SHEIKH ABDULLAH

A Monograph by Y.D. Gundevia

Introduction

“Why don’t you suggest that Kashmīr should be an independent country, with its territorial integrity guaranteed by both India and Pakistan ?”

“Independent ! Independent of both India and Pakistan, you mean ?”

“Yes, with both India and Pakistan guaranteeing its territorial integrity.”

“No. This would never work. Pakistan has taught us a lesson. Kashmir is too small and too poor. Pakistan would swallow us up. They have tried it once : they would do it again.”

This, strangely enough, is not the record of any sinister conversation between a British or American dignitary and Sheikh Abdullah. This is one of the unrecorded stories of a conversation I was having with Sheikh Abdullah in 1949 in Kashmir House in New Delhi. It was I who was asking the question ; and it was the Sheikh who was giving me the negative answer. I have never asked Sheikh Saheb if he remembers this little conversation ; and I would be very surprised if he did.

The question asked perfectly innocently in 1949 was at that time neither "sedition" nor "conspiracy" for secession, nor any other mighty political atom. It was just a very simple solution that I thought could be an answer to the web of words that was being woven in the United Nations Security Council day after day and month after month. However, Sheikh Abdullah turned the suggestion down in 1949. Today it would not be a possible solution, needless to say ; and the Sheikh does not want it and has never seriously advocated it—though he has quite often been accused of wanting to make Kashmir independent of both India and Pakistan.

I was then very small fry in the Ministry of External Affairs and Sheikh Abdullah was very big fish. I had come back from Burma in 1948 after three years, and had missed all the excitement of the great Transfer of Power. As Joint Secretary in, what was then, the Commonwealth Relations Department, I had been asked to handle the somewhat sensitive problem of the recovery of abducted women, on both sides of the border—and this included many hundred Kashmiri girls also, of course. Never having been a proper, sedate "Secretariat Officer", I was dropping bricks all over the place—but we managed to get a few things done.

Mridula Sarabhai was setting about this business of the recovery of abducted women like a tigress-with-cubs, and I had to work with her. I had been warned to be "very careful" because she was reputed to be a "dangerous woman" in the new set-up. Why ? Because "she has direct access to the Prime Minister" ! After we had played about with a hash-of-a-draft that Mridula had worked out, we went to Lahore, and came back in a little over 48 hours with a complete agreement with Pakistan on the question of the recovery of the abducted women including the Kashmiri girls.

I remember telling Gopala Swami Iyengar, who was Nehru's Minister for Kashmir Affairs, that this had been made possible because Mridula had exactly the same reputation in Pakistan as she had in Delhi : the same dual role, one of being "very dangerous" and the other of having "direct access to the Prime Minister"—this time the Prime Minister of Pakistan. "A bloody nuisance" was the common epithet, I found, in Delhi and in Lahore.

I bring Mridula into this Introduction because at least a fifth of the “sins” of Sheikh Abdullah are the “sins” of Mridula Sarabhai ; and although she has never been “charged” with conspiracy and sedition, and never brought to court, she has shared part of the honours with him of being imprisoned for several months without trial over the Kashmir issue. And I remember her also because it was through her that I first came to know Sheikh Abdullah in 1948-50 ; and we remained friends, despite my ten years out of India, from 1950 to 1960, an exile on foreign assignments during which several billion gallons of the waters of the Jhelum flowed so erratically under the bridges in Srinagar—which is the story to be pieced together in this book in which the Sheikh speaks for himself.

Sheikh—his early years ; the Muslim Conference ; the National Conference ; Arrest 1944.

If one is to run over briefly the early political history of Kashmir in the 'thirties, one might begin with the group of young men who called themselves the "Reading Room Party". In this an Aligarh University graduate, who was then a junior teacher in a Srinagar High School, was the leading light, the leading "agitator"—and Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah was his name. The Reading Room Party soon turned itself into the All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference. The Muslim Conference has been dubbed a communal body, but, in the very first presidential address, Abdullah made it perfectly clear that "the Kashmir movement is not communal but has come into existence to get the grievances of all the classes of people redressed." This was in 1932.

The political battle was obviously against the Dogra rule and Dogra domination in administration. The majority community was obviously hit the most, and if it was the Muslim community that started the political struggle, it need not be anything surprising that the young agitators called themselves the "Muslim Conference".

In the same presidential address Abdullah had said : "We assure our Hindu and Sikh brothers that we are prepared to help them in the same manner as we do the Musalmans. Our country cannot progress until we learn to live amicably with one another." Thus Sheikh Abdullah had struck the non-communal chord clearly in his first address to the Conference—and he has stuck to this ever since.

By 1938 it was apparent to the leaders that if the political activities in the State were to be really broadbased, it was imperative that the non-Muslims should come into the fray more openly. Jawaharlal Nehru was certainly instrumental in persuading Sheikh Abdullah to see light on this issue. With all this in view the Working Committee of the Conference

adopted a bold resolution (in June, 1938) recommending that the very nature of the organisation should be changed and its constitution amended to make it possible that "all such people who desire to participate in the political struggle may easily become members of the Conference irrespective of their caste or creed."

The Conference accepted this recommendation of the Working Committee, and on 11th June, 1938, the organisation of the party renamed itself the All-Jammu and Kashmir National Conference, opening its doors formally to all the communities in the State. At its first session in Anantnag in October 1939, the new Conference demanded, among other things, adult franchise and recommended a reservation of seats for the minorities. Its principal demand was responsible government subject to only the general control and residuary powers of the Maharaja, who was to be responsible to an elected legislature.

All this was not to Mohammed Ali Jinnah's liking in India and Sheikh Abdullah fell foul of Jinnah and his Muslim League, who did everything they could to pamper and encourage what remained of the old "Muslim" Conference. When Jinnah came to Kashmir in July, 1944, he complained in a public statement that Sheikh Abdullah had "indulged in language of a most offensive character" in attacking him.

The Muslim Conference was not allowed to die the natural death that it deserved. Jinnah and his Muslim League in India saw to it that the reactionary elements survived in Kashmir even if they did not thrive.

The National Conference, nevertheless, was taking one stride forward after another under the leadership of Sheikh Abdullah, and the party made more and more radical demands, in keeping with the fast moving political picture across the border in the rest of India under Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru.

For the Dogra ruler of the State, it was a question of survival. From 1931 to 1938 Sheikh Abdullah had already been arrested and imprisoned five times. On May 26, 1944, the Sheikh was arrested again—and this time he remained in prison till October 1947.

Much had happened during these three years of imprisonment. The zero hour had come and gone. India had been partitioned and two Dominions had been carved out of the mighty carcass. The princely states had acceded to either India or Pakistan. Leaving out the little thorn of Junagadh, the only two states in dispute were Kashmir and Hyderabad, one with a Muslim majority population and a Hindu ruler, and the other with a Hindu majority population and a Muslim ruler.

Kashmir was obviously a dilemma. The ruler was a Hindu ; the major political party, the National Conference, was pledged to secularism. The leader of the party, by then in jail, was neither in favour with Pakistan's Jinnah, nor with the ruler of the State—though for completely divergent reasons.

Being a border state, the ruler was free to accede to either India or Pakistan. Either choice was arguable and legitimate. He could have acceded to Pakistan on the ground that the majority of his subjects were Muslim. He could have acceded to India on the ground that the major political party was preaching secularism and Kashmir bordered on India as much as it did on Pakistan. But he was unsure of his own safety in Pakistan as he was unsure of the Sheikh, who had been imprisoned half a dozen times for his anti-British, anti-ruler attitudes.

Maharaja Hari Singh toyed with an alternative—a Standstill Agreement with both India and Pakistan, to give himself some breathing time. Sardar Patel sent word to the Maharaja, through nobody less than Lord Louis Mountbatten, that India would stand by and completely accept a Standstill Agreement. Pakistan accepted the proposal, but Jinnah didn't like it—and the invasion began.

The Invasion of Kashmir

It would be futile to attempt to tell the story of the rape of Kashmir in 1947 in 10 or 20 lines. It ranks among the major tragedies of the post-war world.

I have always looked upon Kashmir as one of the after-maths of the still erupting volcano of Asian independence after the Second World War. The seething hot lava is still flowing from one end of Asia to another, from the Philippines in the Pacific to Pakistan and the Arabian Sea—and beautiful Kashmir in the hot, geological earthquake belt of the Himalayas, has got the worst of it, with two rivals created by the partition of the sub-continent fighting for her sheer, ravishing beauty. I think Sheikh Abdullah feels very much in the same way—and that is why his central thesis today is: “For God’s sake, let there be peace between India and Pakistan.” And who wouldn’t agree with him ?

The other half of the sordid story is the equally unending verbal battle in the world forum, the United Nations and its important executive, the Security Council, of which something just has to be said if we are going to talk about Kashmir.

Pakistani tribesmen, properly armed and otherwise properly assisted by the Pakistan army, entered Kashmir in October 1947, and village after village fell to their loot, arson and rape. India at first hesitated to come to the Maharaja’s help (the fatal first signs of our Hindu logic) unless there was due and proper accession of the State of Jammu and Kashmir to the Indian Union. Faced with the rape of Kashmir by Pakistan, the ruler acceded to India on October 26, 1947.

After this, but not until then, Jawaharlal Nehru sent two telegrams to the Prime Minister of Pakistan, one on 31 October, 1947, and the other a few days later, appealing for peace. There was no reply ; the only response on the ground was that the tribal invasion became more and more actively assisted by the Pakistani army.

On New Year's day, 1948, the Indian Representative to the United Nations addressed a letter to the President of the Security Council, under Article 35, which allowed a member to bring to the attention of the Security Council any situation, the continuance of which was likely to endanger the maintenance of peace and security.

This was a typical letter from a new-born, idealist India with immense faith in a world body and world opinion. It requested the Security Council "to ask the Government of Pakistan....to prevent Pakistani personnel, military and civil, from participating or assisting in the invasion of the Jammu and Kashmir State", deny the invaders access to any use of its territory for operations against Kashmir and also deny military and other supplies and "all kinds of aid that might tend to prolong the present struggle."

Anyone now reading this tragic complaint in our letter of 1 January, 1948, can only exclaim: "God! how naive we were!" We had assumed that two plus two made four. It took many years of international frustration to teach us that in international ethics two plus two make anything other than four.

After spending a little too much time studying higher logic, I had come to the conclusion, long ago, that logic could be a curse, and especially didactic logic which can so easily be overdone. Our case before the Security Council was always grammatically correct, logically sound and mathematically foolproof. Or so we thought.

We spelt out "AGGRESSION", we coined phrases and demanded the "vacation of aggression" which only made English Websters wonder where we got this from!

The most worthwhile comment on our case for Kashmir that I ever heard was in Moscow, in 1951. Manlio Brozio, who was then Italy's Ambassador to the USSR, was a very eminent lawyer. On his request that I might explain Kashmir to him I rattled out the entire piece for an hour and a half: " $2 \times 2 \times 2 \times \dots N$ is equal to 2 to the power N (2^N) Mr. Ambassador", I said just a little out of breath. Ambassador Brozio listened to me patiently and then said: "Mr. Gundevia you are a very good lawyer and I am a very good lawyer. I understand you; but nobody will believe you!"

He was absolutely right—and there is nothing else to it.

The Security Council Resolution

After eight months of dilly-dallying, the Commission appointed by the Security Council came out with a draft resolution on August 13, 1948. This was in three parts : Part I provided for a ceasefire ; Part II for a truce agreement—under which Pakistan would accept an unconditional obligation to withdraw its troops from the State as well as the tribesmen and the Pakistani nationals, the Commission, at the same time, recognising the necessity to keep enough Indian forces in the State to ensure law and order including the defence of the State ; Part III provided that after Part I was carried out, and the truce agreement concluded under Part II, the parties and the Commission would consider ways and means of ascertaining the will of the people.

India accepted this resolution subject to a number of assurances which the Commission gave. These said : that the sovereignty of Jammu and Kashmir would not be brought into question even in State territory evacuated by Pakistani troops ; during the period of truce the territory evacuated by Pakistani troops would not be consolidated to the disadvantage of the State ; and if finally a plebiscite were held, the resolution would not in any way recognise the right of Pakistan to have any part in it.

However much you read and re-write the millions of redundant words uttered in endless debates in the Security Council, what I have “digested” above is and was the only end result. After the Ceasefire the first thing that the Security Council should have insisted upon was the complete withdrawal of Pakistani troops, Pakistani raiders or tribesmen and all other Pakistani personnel. This was never done. Instead, in flagrant contradiction of the Security Council resolution, Pakistan consolidated its hold in the northern areas—in Gilgit and elsewhere—and India, instead of fighting this immediately and on the spot, kept on “protesting” to the Security Council and, years later, vociferously demanding the “vacation of aggression” before this impotent international body.

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Two things emerged as a result of this continuing, fruitless debate. In later years, before and after the second war with Pakistan in 1965, whenever the outside world talked about resolving the Kashmir issue in accordance with United Nations resolutions, there was always pressure on India to implement Part III of the August 1948 resolution. We were always reminded that we had agreed to consult the wishes of the people of Kashmir. This was typically Pakistan's case. Parts I and II, which required the complete withdrawal of Pakistani troops from the entire territory of Jammu and Kashmir after the Ceasefire, were conveniently left out of account.

The second factor was that this one-sided outcry outside India gave or seemed to give some international sanctity to the call for a plebiscite which was later raised inside Kashmir by Sheikh Abdullah's supporters—and which had little or nothing to do with the United Nations resolutions.

But we must come back to Kashmir. By 28 October, 1947, when the Maharaja's accession to the Indian Union was accepted by New Delhi and Indian troops started flying into Kashmir, the Pakistani marauders were across the first bridges on the Jhelum on their way to Srinagar. The accession was unconditional and final as far as the Maharaja was concerned. But while accepting the accession the Government of India added to this a rider that when the current troubles were over, the question would be put to the people in a plebiscite, and the wishes of the people on this issue of accession would be respected. Why? Logic again: the autocratic ruler did not speak for the people and therefore "*vox populi*" alone could be "*vox Dei*".

Sheikh Abdullah was promptly released and his immediate task was to organise the people with what little they had—even if it was only *lathis* and spears—and help the Indian army throw out the raiders and, in the later stages, the regular Pakistani army itself from the State.*

*The brilliant and very little known part played by the Jammu and Kashmir Rifles in these Kashmir operations has now been recorded in *Jammu and Kashmir Arms* by Maj. General D.K. Palit (Palit and Dutt, 1972).

However, even while "the noise of battle rolled among the mountains", there was no slowing down of the political wheels in Srinagar. On 5 March, 1948, the ruler was compelled to issue a proclamation constituting a popular government with a council of ministers and a Prime Minister and Sheikh Abdullah became the obvious first incumbent of this office. The new Indian constitution was by then coming on the anvil and four representatives of the State were appointed to represent the State in the Constituent Assembly of India.

Somewhere at this stage came the August, 1948, three-part Resolution of the Security Council. India had accepted this Resolution after obtaining certain vital clarifications of the various issues involved. But Pakistan was not forthcoming in her response till her military position became precarious in December, 1948.

Part I of the Resolution, as we have seen, provided for a mutual Ceasefire—and this was brought about on 31 December, 1948. A Ceasefire was militarily an advantage to Pakistan and it was "thus far and no further" with them. Pakistan had no intention to comply with Part II of the famous Resolution, and she did not at any stage withdraw a single soldier from the territory east of the Ceasefire Line.

If Pakistan had been made to act in accordance with Part II of the Resolution by the Security Council, the Council or the Commission might have been able to find ways and means of ascertaining the wishes of the people as envisaged in Part III. Human memory is not that short. Pakistan's loot, rape and arson had not been forgotten in 1949. Pakistan realized that if any attempt had been made to ascertain the wishes of the people in reasonable time after the Ceasefire the verdict would go one hundred per cent in favour of India. Pakistan also knew, full well, that if she did not implement Part II, India would never allow Part III to come into the picture. Her game obviously was to consolidate her position on her side of the Ceasefire Line, quietly circumvent Part II, and get her Western friends in the Security Council to demand a plebiscite—and then put the blame on India for not agreeing to a plebiscite. In this, she won hands down. All subsequent debates in the Security Council were directed against India's refusal to

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hold a plebiscite but no one asked Pakistan to vacate occupied territory before a plebiscite could be held, despite India's vociferous demands for the "vacation of aggression".

However, that could not hold up a series of other developments in the State. One of the first steps of Abdullah's popular government was land reform, the Big Landed Estates Abolition Act (the five words speak for themselves). The theocratic land tenures were abolished at one stroke. The main purpose of the reforms was to limit the acreage of agricultural land which a landlord could possess; and this was cut down to twenty acres. The intermediary *zamindar* was removed and the land went to the actual tiller. And all this was done without the payment of any compensation to the proprietors. Among other reforms, the system of compulsory procurement of food produce was abolished as also the water-levies on land irrigated by canals in existence prior to 1948-49.

All this legislation was absolutely non-discriminatory; the land laws and land appropriation hit the Hindu as well as the Muslim landlords all over Kashmir. But there were more "big landed estates" with the Hindus, in Jammu especially—and they had their own back on Sheikh Abdullah in three or four years, as we shall see.

In May 1949 Maharaja Hari Singh bowed out of the picture and went into voluntary exile and his son, Yuvraj Karan Singh, stepped into his shoes as the constitutional Head of State. But even that was not enough. The people's government and Sheikh Abdullah had targeted on the abolition of hereditary monarchy and creation of an elected Head of State, and no less.

The Delhi Agreement

By 1949 the Constituent Assembly in New Delhi was fast hammering out the new Indian Constitution. Kashmir's accession to the new Indian Union had to be put in the correct perspective. This could only be based on the Instrument of Accession signed by Maharaja Hari Singh and accepted by the then Governor-General, Lord Louis Mountbatten on 26 October, 1947.

This Instrument of Accession specified only three subjects on which the Government of India could legislate or make laws applicable to Jammu and Kashmir, namely defence, foreign affairs and communications. This was spelt out very clearly in the new Indian Constitution. Representatives of the Jammu and Kashmir government headed by Sheikh Abdullah had been closely associated with framers of the Constitution in Delhi. Among many, one of the major hurdles was the application or otherwise of the provisions relating to citizenship, fundamental rights and the directive principles of State policy, *i.e.* the first fifty-odd articles of the Constitution and a lot else. The end result was Article 370 of the Indian Constitution.

Article 370 was adopted by the Constituent Assembly on 17 October, 1949. The Head of State, Yuvraj Karan Singh, issued a Proclamation on 25 November, 1949, which laid down that the Constitution shortly to be adopted by the Constituent Assembly of India "shall in so far as it is applicable to the State of Jammu and Kashmir" govern the relationship between the State and the contemplated Union of India.

Under Article 370, clause (1) (b), the powers of the Parliament to make laws applicable to the State of Jammu and Kashmir are limited to :

- (i) those matters in the Union List and the Concurrent List which, in consultation with the Government of the State, are declared by the President to correspond to matters specified in the Instrument of Accession governing the accession of the State to the Dominion of India as the matters with respect to which the Dominion Legislature may make laws for that State ; and

(ii) such matters in the said Lists, as, with the concurrence of the Government of the State, the President may by order specify.

There is a further provision which lays down that if the concurrence of the State Government has been given "before the Constituent Assembly for the framing of the Constitution of the State is convened" the matter "shall be placed before such Assembly for such decision as it may take thereon."

Thus, according to the Constitution, a million things provided for in the Indian Constitution did not apply to the State of Jammu and Kashmir. It was agreed and decided that a Constituent Assembly would be set up for the framing of the Constitution of Jammu and Kashmir State and that that Assembly would spell out which provisions of the Indian Constitution would apply to the State, and whether these would apply with or without any modification.

The important discussions with the Kashmir representatives on these vital issues were recorded in what has come to be called the "Delhi Agreement".

While explaining the Delhi Agreement in Parliament Jawaharlal Nehru said :

...there was general agreement that there should be Fundamental Rights and those rights should apply to the State. But again there were great apprehensions in the minds of our friends from Kashmir. First of all, the question was how far these Fundamental Rights might come in the way of their land legislation or any other development of it...The second thing was...all this business of invasion of Kashmir, war, Ceasefire, all kinds of continuing tensions, difficulties due to infiltration, etc....espionage cases...there is sabotage and the rest. So we were told that some part of the Fundamental Rights might very well hamper the activities of the State Government from taking (necessary) precautions. We agreed that this was essential in the interests of Kashmir, situated as the State is now...

Sheikh Abdullah said more or less exactly the same thing when he presented the result of the Delhi Agreement to the Kashmir Constituent Assembly :

It is obvious that while our Constitution is being framed, the fundamental rights and duties of a citizen have necessarily got to be defined. It was, however, agreed that the Fundamental Rights contained in the Constitution of India could not be conferred on the residents of Jammu and Kashmir in their entirety, taking into account the economic, social and political character of our movement

as enunciated in the New Kashmir Plan...Particular care would have to be taken to preserve the basic character of the decision taken by this House on the question of land compensation, as well as the transfer of land to the tiller and other matters...

I have gone into all this in some detail to show to what extent the Government of India was prepared to go in the matter of almost unfettered autonomy for the State of Jammu and Kashmir right up to August 1952, which is the date of these two speeches made in Delhi and Srinagar. The two leaders spoke with one voice, even if Nehru was a little more apologetic and Abdullah less so. India was prepared to leave even the most vital provisions of Citizenship and the very Fundamental Rights of the citizens to the Constituent Assembly of Jammu and Kashmir State.

I was speaking to Sheikh Abdullah more recently and this was about the Supreme Court. He told me that for days on end he had discussed all these matters with Nehru in 1952—citizenship, fundamental rights, the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court and related matters. Wherever it was finally agreed that everything should be left to the Kashmir Constituent Assembly, Nehru's remark was "....Oh, we will bind you in chains of gold, don't worry!" The two men were the most ardent mutual admirers and there was complete and unreserved mutual trust between them. How did one of them come to deserve iron shackles on his wrists only a year later?

But we are nowhere near the last act of the tragedy yet.

On 1 May, 1951, Yuvraj Karan Singh issued a proclamation convoking a Constituent Assembly for Kashmir on the basis of free elections in which all the citizens of the State over 21 years of age would vote by a direct and secret ballot. The elections were held in September-October 1951, and the Constituent Assembly began its sessions on 31 October, 1951.

The Assembly appointed two committees : one was to examine and report broadly on the basic principles which should govern the constitutional structure of the State and the quantum of accession of the State to the Union of India, the second committee was to examine the application of Fundamental Rights and the determination of matters relating to citizenship.

A number of decisions were reported to have been taken by these two committees, but before they could finally report to the Constituent Assembly Sheikh Abdullah was unceremoniously arrested on 9 August 1953—and thus the chapter ended. With the Sheikh's supporters out of the way, fresh committees were appointed. They reported differently to the continuing Constituent Assembly, and the State's Constitution was hammered out and subsequently became law.

Sheikh Abdullah's stand today is that he is not bound by any decisions taken by his successors in Kashmir and the Government of India with the so-called concurrence of the Kashmir Constituent Assembly which, after his arrest and the arrest of his followers in August 1953, was nothing but a "rump" of the original decisions taken by freely elected members.

Right Wingers, "Reactionaries" and the Little Men

In all fairness, one has to see whether there is any justification in the Sheikh's stand. And for this we must go back to the question : If Nehru and Abdullah were, in August 1952, such ardent, mutual admirers, and when there was this complete, unreserved, mutual trust between these two very important personalities, how did Nehru come to be party to the Sheikh being dethroned, unceremoniously arrested and later charged with conspiracy—and all this within a year of the Delhi Agreement and the speeches in the two Constituent Assemblies ?

When I asked Sheikh Abdullah this question, not long ago, his answer was simple : "The reactionary elements", he said, "had ample access to Delhi ; Sardar Patel and several others had no faith in me—and that is putting it very mildly, I would say—Nehru first resisted this campaign of vilification against me ; but ultimately he succumbed." This explains a lot.

That Sardar Patel and Jawaharlal Nehru did not see eye to eye on Kashmir, as in so many other matters, is writ large in our history. No one would deny that the great and very powerful Sardar was not in love with Sheikh Abdullah and did not trust him at all. There was, thus, this complete contrast in the approach of Jawaharlal Nehru and the Sardar to the problems in Kashmir in general, and Sheikh Abdullah in particular.

Today, one does not have to go very far to look for proof of these differences between the Sardar and Jawaharlal Nehru. *Sardar Patel's Correspondence* (Navjivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad) is fast being published and they promise to cover ten volumes ; and the first volume has been given the illuminating title "New Light on Kashmir". The differences are writ large—and I have no doubt that the differences are meant to be highlighted.

When the Sheikh talks of "reactionaries", he obviously refers to the big landed estates, which had been struck down by the Big Estates Abolition Act, one of the first legislative enactments of Sheikh Abdullah's popular government. Completely non-discriminatory as this legislation was, it had hit the Hindu and the Dogra *zamindars* in Jammu more than the others, for the simple reason that under the long Dogra rule these minorities in Kashmir were obviously the "affluent society" in the State.

Sardar Patel was all for India becoming an exemplary secular state and all that—this was the Mahatma's teaching and this was on what the Mahatma ultimately earned his martyrdom. But were there to be no limits? Was India to sit back and watch this little Muslim-majority State appropriate landed property without paying any compensation to the predominantly Hindu proprietors and the Hindu landlords? As the Sardar saw it, the Sheikh had gone miles outside the Indian Constitution in denying his people even the Fundamental Rights, specifically in regard to property—"...particular care would have to be taken to preserve the basic character of the decision taken by this House", he had said, "on the question of land compensation...". Kashmir's new Constitution, he was making sure, was not going to reopen the question of "no compensation".

The Sheikh, it would seem, has a great deal of justification in maintaining that the "reactionary elements" had ample access to Delhi—though not at Nehru's court, which was not the only court in Delhi during those early years. Whatever may have been Nehru's views on the original wording of Article 31 in the Indian Constitution on the question of compensation, I can clearly recall the Prime Minister praising Sheikh Abdullah, during an officials' meeting in 1952, for what he had done in the matter of land reforms in Kashmir, while he was fuming at the fact that little or nothing had been done in most of the other states in India in the matter of abolition of *zamindari*, despite this having been a cardinal plank in all Congress pronouncements over the years. The relatively leftist Prime Minister (relative to the Sardar, I mean) when he was praising Kashmir's abolition of the Big Estates, had no regrets

at all (from what I could gather) that Kashmir had brazenly gone in for what could be called expropriation without compensation.

The Sardar, whom the accepted and acknowledged rightists of today claim as their leader and mentor, was known to have been more than just unhappy over Sheikh Abdullah having got away with so much—with everything he wanted, for that matter—in Article 370, which Nehru had literally coaxed and cajoled the Indian Constituent Assembly into accepting.

If *Sardar Patel's Correspondence, Vol. I*, clearly reflects the differences in the approach of the two Indian leaders to Sheikh Abdullah, the grim details of the implementation of the Home Ministry's policies to undo what the Sheikh had done and finally knock Sheikh Abdullah out of the Kashmir picture—the always beautiful Kashmir landscape—are given in B.N. Mullik's book *My Years with Nehru—Kashmir* (Allied Publishers). B.N. Mullik was, in those crucial years, a senior member of the Intelligence Bureau in the Home Ministry—and was later to become its Director.

Mullik's book was severely criticised in two illuminating articles in the *Indian Express* of 29 and 30 October, 1971—"New Light on Kashmir"—by Prem Nath Bazaz, a Kashmiri Pandit and a student of Kashmir affairs. P.N. Bazaz tried to establish in these articles that the book is "nothing but a beautiful narration of the success which the author (B.N. Mullik) achieved, through hard and devoted toil, spread over many years." But what was the Intelligence Chief's objective? Mullik freely admits that after the Sheikh's arrest the aim was to see Sheikh Abdullah and his associates "ruined for ever" (P. 104). Bazaz's thesis is that in the process, or in the bargain, Mullik and the Home Ministry "compelled Sheikh Abdullah to become an inveterate enemy of India", and that Mullik was absolutely unconcerned about this end result.

Knowing something about various matters discussed in Mullik's book, I could not hold my hand and in another article in the *Indian Express* of 22 November, 1971—"Is there Any Light in Kashmir"—I strongly supported P.N. Bazaz's thesis. With the kind permission of the *Indian Express* (and Mr. P.N. Bazaz) I am reproducing something of what has been

said in these articles in the paragraphs that follow, to explain Sheikh's seeming *volte face*. My contention is that it was not a *volte face* on the part of Sheikh Abdullah. It was an *about-face* on the part of the Government of India, with the Home Ministry winning all along the line—and Jawaharlal Nehru gradually succumbing to "right wing pressures" (as the Sheikh puts it today).

The Sheikh's primary sin, it would seem, was Article 370 of the Indian Constitution. But the Article was not something that Sheikh Abdullah had conjured up by himself with a magic wand. As we have seen, the Instrument of Accession specified only three subjects on which the Government of India could legislate—defence, external affairs and communications; and there had been long discussions between the Kashmir representatives, led by the Sheikh, and the framers of the Constitution in Delhi, before the Article was finally formulated and incorporated in the Constitution. It was, thus, the end result of a perfectly democratic process, a product of the democratically elected Constituent Assembly of India, and it had the powerful backing of Jawaharlal Nehru, India's greatest visionary.

Article 370 was anathema to the Praja Parishad, especially in Jammu, understandably, and the Praja Parishad was anathema to the Sheikh—and to Jawaharlal Nehru also. It would be pertinent to say, here, that Nehru, till the end, looked upon the Jana Sangh (the offspring of the R.S.S. and the Praja Parishad) as a "right wing communal organisation" and one of his famous last words, literally, at an officials' meeting in 1964 were, "the danger to India is not Communism; it is Hindu, right wing communalism." He had prefaced this by saying, in the same discussion: "Why are you always scared of Communism? What is it that Communists can do, that we have not done!" So one can see that the Sheikh's allergy to the Praja Parishad was one of the common political bonds between him and the Prime Minister. So was Article 370.

From the Sheikh's speeches in the Kashmir Constituent Assembly that followed, it was clear that the "no compensation" part of the Big Estates take-over was going to be sanctified in the Kashmir Constitution, which, in turn, was next on

the anvil. The only hope, the only way out, if a lot else was to be averted, was to throw Sheikh Abdullah out before the two Committees appointed by him to go into these various matters could submit their recommendations to the Kashmir Constituent Assembly.

Mullik was himself the Deputy Director of Intelligence, I think, when he first interested himself in Kashmir. Sardar Patel had told him (so Mullik tells us in his book) that he very much feared that Abdullah would one day let India down, "and let Nehru down", and "come out in his real colours".

The game began, it would seem, with an unobtrusive junior intelligence officer being posted in Kashmir, nominally to watch out for Pakistani activities in the State, but actually to spy on Sheikh Abdullah. The Sheikh came to hear of the activities of this I.B. Officer and soon had him thrown out, with Nehru's help.

The Intelligence Bureau of the Home Ministry was not going to give up the matter that easily. Their sole aim was to ensure that the various reports from Kashmir discredited Sheikh in the eyes of the ruling Congress and Nehru; and their second line of attack was to bring about dissension among Abdullah's followers. They gradually succeeded. On the second occasion, when the Kashmir Constituent Assembly was very much in session and the Sheikh had shown his hand, various reports on the so-called developments in Kashmir found favour in Delhi (in October, 1952) and the Sheikh's demand to remove two subordinate intelligence officers from the scene was turned down by the Home Ministry—and this time not seriously resisted by Nehru. Right wing propaganda, a whispering campaign and political backbiting, which is not a speciality only of Kashmir—and all this perfectly supported by "intelligence reports", which were duly edited in the Home Ministry and then sent to the Prime Minister—all this was having the desired effect.

The Kashmir Prime Minister, at this stage, was dealing pretty harshly with Muslim communalism of the pro-Pakistan variety and Hindu communalism of the strongly entrenched Praja Parishad (today's Jana Sangh) in Jammu. The action against Muslim communalists was quietly welcomed in India ;

but every move against the Praja Parishad was very strongly criticised. Mullik says : "If anything accelerated the final break between Sheikh Abdullah and India, it was the Praja Parishad's agitation in the winter of 1952-53 in Jammu Province over the demand for the full integration of Jammu and Kashmir with India on the basis of one Constitution, one flag and one President." That this would mean the negation of the Instrument of Accession, the subsequent Delhi Agreement and Article 370, it would seem, was nothing to be bothered about. The tone in which this "final break" is applauded in Mullik's book, leads one to the conclusion that this is exactly what the Home Ministry was working for.

With all the vilification of Sheikh Abdu'lah, Nehru's mind was apparently sufficiently poisoned by July 1953. If Mullik is to be believed, the Prime Minister is reported to have told him, on July 31, that there was "no other alternative but to remove Sheikh Abdullah and install Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed in his place". I do not believe that this is true.

Many people, but only after the death of Nehru, have come out with one version after another of the arrest—each claiming the hero's role in this sordid story. And no one seems to bother that the perfectly unconstitutional "dismissal" of the Prime Minister of Kashmir by the Yuvraj, simultaneously followed by his arrest in the dead of night, when he was in Gulmarg, was the death of democracy in Kashmir.

Was Nehru at all responsible for these extreme and extraordinary measures ? The fact that several of the heroes of this epic have tried to take so much credit for themselves having been solely responsible for the last steps culminating in the arrest of Sheikh Abdullah leads one inevitably to accept that Nehru could, at best, have agreed to the Kashmir Prime Minister's dismissal, but certainly not his arrest.

We might let all the vainglorious little men take the credit for the arrest of a State Prime Minister ; but then they must also be charged with the murder of democracy in Kashmir. The *Sadar-i-Riyasat* of Kashmir had the constitutional right, shall we say, to demand the resignation of his Prime Minister, or remove him if he refused to resign. But could he remove him

or dismiss him when he had the overwhelming confidence of the people and an unquestioned majority in the Kashmir Legislature? If there is any suggestion that before his actual dismissal Sheikh Abdullah did not command a majority in the Legislature, it would be a downright lie—and, no wonder, such a claim has never been put forward too loudly. Some of his Cabinet colleagues did in fact defect but his majority in the Assembly was never questioned.

If, by 1953, Sheikh Abdullah was misusing his powers, the only man who could have talked sense into him was Nehru. But Nehru was being poisoned day and night, and he obviously did not make the effort. My own feeling is, despite everything that is now being said after his death, that Nehru did not make any such effort because he was never convinced that his friend was walking along a wrong path—and the Sheikh's arrest was, and had to be, made behind his back.

Chief Ministers in many states in India have been sacked by the President of India, properly, under the Constitution, during the twenty years that have followed this Kashmir tragedy. But no Chief Minister has been dismissed when he commanded a majority in the Legislature, and no Chief Minister, certainly, has been arrested simultaneously after his so-called dismissal and put away, unceremoniously, behind bars.

No one can deny that Kashmir is a strategic, sensitive, border State. But if strategic states require special treatment we should never have introduced "democracy" in Kashmir. And, if as an afterthought, we realised that this had been a mistake, we should have handled it differently from the start.

For the Home Ministry the arrest of Sheikh Abdullah was not the end of the story : it was only the end of a chapter and the beginning of another. It is admitted all round that Nehru was unhappy at this ultimate development. Far more had to be said and done before Nehru could be satisfied. The story put out was that the Sheikh had been receiving large sums of money from Pakistan and that he had gone to Gulmarg (with his wife and family) on the night of his arrest to contact important Pakistan agents—or, to make it even more dramatic, did he intend going over, bodily, to Pakistan ?

All this malicious propaganda had to be supported by the story that the Government of India had evidence and only wanted time to collect more evidence, to charge the Sheikh and his followers with "conspiracy"—the good old British terminology would call it "waging war against the King"!

Nehru was poisoned—and successfully silenced.

It is important to point out that he was only silenced. If he had been *convinced* that Sheikh Abdullah was really guilty, was Jawaharlal Nehru the sort of man who would, or could, keep his mouth shut on the subject ?

All the little people that want to claim credit for their great personal role in the arrest of Sheikh Abdullah in August, 1953, have, surprisingly uniformly, waited patiently for the great man to leave us for good, on that fateful day in May, 1964, before they opened their mouths to tell us what Nehru said to them on this date, and what he said about Sheikh being this, that and the other, on that date—and on and on they go. They waited, long, till the ashes of the dead Prime Minister were scattered over India before they began telling their sorry tales.

Mullik's book gives a string of quotes on what Nehru told him at different times about the Sheikh's sins. At one stage, Nehru 'continued his talk against the Sheikh and mentioned all his communal activities throughout the period he had acted as the National Conference leader. Pandit Nehru said that all the trouble in Kashmir was due to Sheikh's communal outlook.... communalism was a disease with him and he would never get rid of it, and his entire outlook and behaviour was based on the fact that Kashmir valley had a Muslim majority.' This is only one of the 'quotes' from Mullik's book, which Bazaz pinpoints in his articles.

More recently has come another little paper-back, *Kashmir—What Really Happened*, by Ajit Prasad Jain (Jaico Publishing House, Bombay, 1972). Now we must believe that it was not B.N. Mullik at all who brought about the coup ; don't you see, it was Shri Ajit Prasad Jain ? He was then so close to the Prime Minister that the Prime Minister specially sent him to Srinagar ; and he telephoned the Prime Minister from Srinagar ; and Rafi Ahmed Qidwai was there in the room with the Prime

Minister (Rafi Saheb is also dead); and he alone can tell you what Nehru said to him, not once, but twice, thrice and umpteen times. After reading my one time friend Shri Ajit Prasad Jain's book, I want only to add a little postscript and say that he is quite right, and I do not understand why my equally good friend, B.N. Mullik, does not give him all due credit for the *coup d'etat* in Kashmir in August 1953.

But B.N. Mullik and A.P. Jain are, of course, not the only heroes. There is the late General B.M. Kaul, who put us all in his debt by telling us an untold story, which includes his hero-role in Gulmarg; and at least one other less known army officer, who has told us exactly what really happened—and a host of other lesser mortals. Our book-stalls are full of stories on *what really happened*. In all those various cloth-bound or paper-back versions there is, however, only *one element* that is common—and that is that they had, one and all, kept their mouths shut and their pens dry till after Nehru's death. It is this flood of hero-claims that leads me to add this one more version, albeit an unconventional interpretation, of what probably happened and why it happened.

Nehru and Abdullah

My two-fold view is : that Jawaharlal Nehru was not party to Sheikh Abdullah's arrest and he had certainly not authorised it ; he had been poisoned and silenced into acquiescence—once the *coup* was a *fait accompli*—though this is bad enough. Secondly, I find it extremely difficult to believe—no matter who says it now—that Nehru was ever convinced, at any stage, that Sheikh Abdullah was a communalist and was conspiring against India in league with Pakistan and the pro-Pakistan elements in Kashmir—of which there are, no doubt, plenty in the State.

And this dual judgment I base on the fact that in the last four years of Nehru's life, when I had the privilege of working very close to him, as Commonwealth Secretary and, later, as Foreign Secretary, I never once heard Jawaharlal Nehru utter one unkind word against Sheikh, not to me and not in my hearing to anyone else. And if Sheikh Abdullah, and the "trial" that was then going on, was discussed once, it must have been discussed a hundred times over in the fourteen hundred odd days that go to make his last four years. I had discussed the Sheikh and his trial with the Prime Minister in meetings when other officers were present, and when no one else was present, in his office rooms, during office hours, and often at his residence out of office hours, and I feel it my bounden duty to record what I have said, in memory of the great man who is not with us any more—that he never once maligned Sheikh Abdullah and never said one cross word against him : and let Sheikh Saheb take this consolation unto himself. Jawaharlal's conduct towards Abdullah, after his release, in April 1964, as we will see, bears this out a hundred fold.

But let us revert to the case against the Sheikh. Despite the Intelligence Bureau having a free hand in Kashmir with the able assistance of Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed, who had been installed in position as Prime Minister on the arrest of

Sheikh Saheb, in the four and a half years that followed not enough material could be cooked up to place any case before a court of law.

Nehru lost his patience and Sheikh Abdullah was released on 8 January, 1958.

As Bazaz points out in his second article in the *Indian Express* (of 30 October, 1971), B.N. Mullik gives his own version or explanation of this sudden release of Sheikh Abdullah in January 1958. On page 87 of his book, the former Intelligence Chief says : "When Sheikh was released, we were sure that he would indulge in such activities as would enable us to get further direct evidence against him, and so we preferred to wait for a while." He was again arrested and sent back to jail on 29 April, 1958.

The Sheikh would have to have behaved like a baby in the four months that he was out. Mullik claims, among other things, to have even gathered evidence in these four months of the "receipt of large sums of money from Pakistan by the Begum during his (Sheikh's) presence in the house." He ends by saying : "When he was sent back to jail, we were quite satisfied that he had built up an unassailable case against himself."

What masterful tactics ! If you can't cook up enough evidence in four and a half years, all you have got to do is to release the suspect. Then Pakistani agents pour into his house and place many thousand rupees into his wife's hands, in the presence of a string of witnesses—after making quite sure, of course, that Sheikh Saheb has no alibi, himself, for the date and hour !

Armed with this extraordinarily useful additional evidence, the first complaint was filed in the court of the Special Magistrate, Jammu, on May 21, 1958, against 25 "conspirators". But Sheikh Abdullah was not in it. Was Nehru still unconvinced, or was he just adamant ? The Sheikh, however, featured in a further complaint that was filed on October 23, five months later. The Begum Saheba was never charged and never brought to book. One would have thought that she would be the principal accused, with hundreds of letters said to be in the hands of the prosecution, "proving" that she was

the principal go-between for the receipt of Pakistani funds. For this serious gap in the prosecution case the only explanation possible, I suppose, is—Nehru's chivalry.

After hanging fire for another four years in the Magistrate's court, the case was at last committed to the Court of Sessions in Jammu, on April 15, 1962. In the Sessions the case went even slower, so much so that the Intelligence Bureau was put on the defensive. Nehru was again losing his patience. Charges and counter-charges were made by the Intelligence Bureau against the accused and by the accused against the Intelligence Bureau, on who was responsible for the delay in the proceedings before the Sessions Judge. The farce became serious enough for the Intelligence Bureau and the Home Ministry to bring out a pamphlet (for free circulation, of course) to explain who was delaying the case.

Came the winter of December-January 1964—and of all things, the Moe-e-Muqaddas or the Holy Relic, so carefully deposited over the years in the Hazratbal shrine, came to the rescue—of both sides. It certainly brought Sheikh Saheb out of jail, but I am sure it must have been a relief to the Home Ministry also, when this serious diversion ended in the conspiracy case, which they had not got anywhere near proving in over 6½ years, being ordered to be withdrawn—and the Sheikh released not long after.

One should not waste too much time on this episode of the theft and recovery of the Moe-e-Muqaddas, since it does not really concern Sheikh Abdullah. Fortunately for him, he was in jail, or he might have made a lovely scapegoat. But Mullik spells out the story of this theft in four entire chapters of his book, so it merits some mention. The relic was found missing from the holy shrine on 27 December, 1963. When the recovery of the Relic was announced after 7 days, on 4 January, 1964, the public refused to accept it as the genuine article. They demanded a Special *Deedar*, or a special exposition of the relic (which custom permitted) and wanted the representatives of the Action Committee, that was leading the perfectly disciplined agitation in the ice-bound streets of Srinagar, with even the day temperature well below zero centi-

grade, to be given an opportunity of close inspection. A team of senior officers of the Home Ministry was holding out against this in Srinagar.

Nehru ordered that the Special *Deedar* must be held to satisfy the people and sent Lal Bahadur Shastri posthaste to Srinagar, to make sure that the *Deedar* was held as demanded by the people. I was given two hours' notice to go to Srinagar with Shastri. Not having been told what was required of me (the Secretary General, my close colleague, M.J. Desai, was supposed to be "handling" this particular "file") I went to the Prime Minister, at his residence, and asked him if he had any particular orders for me. He was a very sick man that morning. After a long pause, he said : "You know Maulana Massoudi and others in this, don't you ?" I told him that I did. "Well, the Maulana wants us to hold the Special *Deedar*. You will be able to help Lal Bahadur in this damned confusion." (The Maulana and several others in the Action Committee were close followers of the Sheikh.)

It was obvious when we landed in Srinagar that the Home Ministry boys on the spot did not want the *Deedar* to be held ; but Shastriji wound his way, most tactfully, through the seemingly unending web.

The tension in the Hazratbal shrine itself on the morning of the *Deedar* was something that one could feel in every pore of every inch of one's skin. I give full marks to Maulana Massoudi ; he handled the show, seemingly single handed, superbly—with Shastri on the stage, a silent spectator.

As we went back to our aircraft to fly back to Delhi that afternoon, after a long silence Shastriji said to me, half musing to himself : "Gundevia, what would have happened, if the Maulana Saheb had declared, at that moment, that the *bal* wasn't genuine ?" "Don't think of it, for God's sake", I said, "it is all over !"

We went straight to the Prime Minister from the airport and Shastri gave him a first hand, detailed account of all that had happened. When he spelt out some of the details of the Home Ministry's handling of the situation in the last 72 hours, Nehru was furious, but Shastri cooled him down, in his own

mild way, covering up the unpleasant parts of episode with, "*Khair, voh to sab to ho gaya*".

But who was the culprit that had the courage to remove the Holy Relic from the Hazratbal shrine and had brought about this political earthquake in the Indo-Gangetic valley ?

The Intelligence Bureau's first masterful investigations had "made it clear that Pakistan, through Pir Maqbul Ghoni, with the assistance of some of his important contacts in Kashmir who had received money for this purpose from Pakistan, had arranged the removal of the Moe-e-Muqaddas" (P. 141). But when the show was over, and the Bureau had claimed all the credit for the mysterious "replacement" of the relic—as mysterious as its loss or disappearance—the culprit or culprits were never brought to book. All we are told is that the "process which led to its replacement" cannot possibly be narrated. "That was an intelligence operation never to be disclosed" (P. 142). Even the Home Ministry officers, we have to remember, are, after all, bound by the Official Secrets Act !

In the evolution of language, one of the phrases that has gained currency, fairly recently, thanks to President Nixon of the United States, is "credibility gap". If the little I have said about the Intelligence Chief's long drawn out chapters, which stretch out to 80 out of 200 pages of his book, creates this credibility gap in the minds of an intelligent reader—my purpose is amply served. With a slight twist of Aristotelian logic, human intelligence (not the "IB") must ask : "When all things are true, then some things must be true; but when some things are false, then what things are true ?" And Aristotle borrowed his syllogism from Hindu logic—so we ought to know the answer.

"What is truth ?" asked Jestling Pilate—and would not stay for an answer.

Be that as it may, the Hazratbal incident certainly put the lid on the conspiracy case. However, in Nehru's mind there was a credibility void—not gap.

After my return from Srinagar my only topic of conversation with my colleague, M.J. Desai, who was then Secretary General, was the withdrawal of the case and the release of Sheikh. Winning over M.J. was most necessary because I had, all along, been

in an isolated minority on the subject, in the jungle of three entire Ministries—Home, Defence and External Affairs. Having got M.J. round, far more readily than I expected, to agree that the “farce must end”, we, together, started on the Prime Minister and I found him most responsive. The modalities of the withdrawal of the case before the Court of Sessions and the release of all the accused would have to be somewhat carefully worked out, M.J. cautiously advised. M.J., I could see, was still the last bastion of the powerful forces in the Home Ministry and the Defence Ministry, who were otherwise completely demoralised.

Then came one last session with the Prime Minister, with Lal Bahadur Shastri, M.J. and myself. M.J. said something about the prosecution being anxious about the “safety” of their witnesses. Lal Bahadurji, typically, came out with a couplet in his soft, polished Urdu. I said, probably for the third time in the discussion, that justice delayed was justice denied—and that enough was enough. This put the Prime Minister back in a fighting mood. He turned to Lal Bahadurji, banged the table, and said : “If a damned thing can’t be proved in four years and in six years, then there’s obviously nothing to be proved.” I knew then that the story was over.

Some last minute lobbying against the withdrawal of the case, however, was still going on in Delhi, though it was now a losing battle because the Prime Minister had made up his mind that the “farce just couldn’t go on”, as he had said in more than one discussion. On April 5, 1964, the new Chief Minister of Kashmir, G.M. Sadiq, issued a press statement to the effect that the case against Sheikh Abdullah was being withdrawn immediately. This shook Delhi. Sadiq had obviously by-passed the usual channels and issued the statement after directly obtaining the concurrence of the Prime Minister. “Damn it, enough is enough”, I can well imagine him telling Sadiq over the telephone.

Let us fall back on the Intelligence Chief for an account of the meeting that same afternoon of the Emergency Committee of the Cabinet at the Prime Minister’s residence, which M.J. Desai and I attended among others :

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Gulzarilal Nanda, T.T. Krishnamachari, Shastri and A.K. Sen were present, besides several Secretaries and myself. The Prime Minister started by saying that if even after fifteen years of association Kashmir still remained in such an unstable state that on a simple issue like the Moe-e-Muqaddas the people could be so provoked as to rise in defiance of the government, then, in his opinion, a new approach had to be made and a radical change in our thinking about Kashmir was called for... He also felt that Sheikh Abdullah had a strong hold on the people of Kashmir and, in the changed circumstances, no political settlement in the Valley could be thought of without bringing him in. It was, therefore, desirable that he should be released.

Thus far, the summary of the Prime Minister's statement is, more or less, correct. But the account goes on :

...and to that extent he (the Prime Minister) supported Sadiq, though he felt unhappy that this decision had been taken by him, unilaterally, without consulting the Government of India.

For my part, I do not recall the Prime Minister saying anything about being "unhappy", or about Sadiq having issued the statement "unilaterally". In truth, the Prime Minister had been beautifully vague, as he alone could be when he wanted to, and in his first, introductory remarks, he had distinctly left the impression on his listeners that he knew that Sadiq was going to issue this statement and he was not one bit sorry that the story was over.

Sheikh Abdullah was released, unconditionally, from jail in Jammu on 8 April, 1973, and he made a triumphal journey home to Srinagar, lionised all the way back in every village all along the route. But here is an example of how far the administration could go in those last days of Nehru's life to thwart the Prime Minister's wishes. Nehru had written the Sheikh a letter on 2 April, asking him or inviting him to come straight to Delhi on his release *and stay with him*, before going to Srinagar. In a news conference on 9 April in Srinagar, the Sheikh said that this letter was not delivered to him in the jail till the 7th, and since by then thousands of his friends had already made detailed plans for his journey back through the Valley, he could not let them down, otherwise he would certainly have first gone to Delhi to meet Nehru before returning home to Srinagar.

Yesterday's criminal conspirator, the same Sheikh Abdullah, came to Delhi on 29 April, 1964, and stayed in the Prime Minister's house, as the Prime Minister's very welcome guest. He held long talks with the Prime Minister naturally. He met several members of the Cabinet, and some of us, smaller fry, also met him and talked to him, repeatedly. During these hours of conversation, there was never any mention of the conspiracy case or any sign of bitterness against any one in India over the treatment meted out to him and the long years of imprisonment. There was always this Gandhian touch about the Sheikh. He seemed worried about the communal situation and he kept reverting to the need to bring about some understanding with Pakistan. Without this there would be no peace in Kashmir.

The Sheikh and President Ayub Khan

We all agreed, Nehru included, that if we could bring Pakistan into an agreement the Kashmir problem could be settled once and for all. But we found Sheikh Abdullah more than a little out of touch with developments—very out of touch with the world, for that matter—and this was easily understandable. He had spent the best part of the previous nine years behind bars. It is all very well to say that he had access to newspapers and had various other facilities in the jail. But he was physically out of touch. We tried to get him to understand that, whatever else, he need not imagine that, while he had been in “lock up” we, some of us who were his friends and even those who were not his friends, had not made an effort to bring about an understanding with Pakistan.

Nehru had more or less readily agreed that, since the Sheikh felt so strongly about it, he might be allowed to go to Pakistan and talk to Ayub, the Pakistan President. But we wanted to brief him, for instance, on the six rounds of talks that we had had with Pakistan from December 1962 to May 1963, and how these efforts, admittedly made under pressure from the United Kingdom and the U.S.A. soon after the war with China, had proved abortive.

In these talks between India and Pakistan our thesis had been that the two countries should re-demarcate the existing Cease Fire Line in Kashmir, modifying it somewhat in *favour* of Pakistan; and this line be treated by both sides as the international boundary between the two countries. Pakistan would keep the portion of Kashmir that it had occupied, *plus more*, and India would keep what it had, *less* some portions of the State that it would, as it were, cede to Pakistan in Kashmir. Once such a line was re-drawn and recognised as the international boundary between the two countries, we had proposed that there might be free transit across the line between the two halves of Kashmir, and both halves could gradually settle down

to peace and prosperity. In actual fact this had been my idea for long and I was convinced that no other solution of the Kashmir problem was ever possible. "Draw the line—and forget everything else" had been my line—always.

The Indian delegation at these six rounds of talks with Pakistan was very ably led by Sardar Swaran Singh (who was then the Minister for Railways) who had, earlier, in 1960, handled and *settled* a number of boundary disputes with Pakistan, specially in the Western zone. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, then President Ayub's Foreign Minister, was leading the Pakistan delegation. We had the first round of talks in Rawalpindi in the last week of December 1962, the second round in Delhi, the third in Karachi, the fourth in Calcutta (to suit Mr. Bhutto's convenience during the Pakistan legislatures' sittings that were then going on in Dacca), the fifth meeting again in Karachi and the sixth and finally abortive meeting was held in Delhi in May 1963. We had discussed everything of import that occurred from 1947-48 onwards. We had discussed all the United Nations resolutions and every conceivable proposal that had been put forward by India and Pakistan and Pakistan's multifarious friends in the United Nations. We had run through all the eternal clichés like "vacation of aggression", "self-determination", "plebiscite", and finally, when nought else remained, we had proposed the creation of an international boundary by a "modification of the Cease Fire Line in *favour* of Pakistan". When such a modified line was indicated on a map by Sardar Swaran Singh to Mr. Bhutto in the fifth round of talks in Karachi Mr. Bhutto had told us that if such a line had been offered by India, say, five years earlier, they might have accepted it as a solution, "....but not today, when you are a defeated nation !"

In the sixth and final round in Delhi, in May, 1963, the Pakistan delegation had begun the meeting by saying that they did not want the talks to continue, they had got nowhere—and they wanted to return home without a final communique. We said we would be prepared to reiterate our offer of a No-War declaration, and suggested that both sides might agree to a withdrawal of troops from the Cease Fire Line, to avoid all possibilities of a confrontation and, maybe, we could resume the

discussions at some later date. Bhutto turned everything down, and went home the next day. A joint communique was issued.

We were a queer, mixed and very secular team talking to Sheikh Abdullah those days in the Prime Minister's house in New Delhi. There was G. Parthasarathi, then our High Commissioner in Pakistan, a staunch South Indian Brahmin; Badruddin Tyabji, who was then Vice Chancellor of Aligarh University and had been Special Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs just before going to Aligarh, a devout Mussalman; and myself, rather an irreligious Parsi, then Commonwealth Secretary. We used to meet Sheikh Saheb and his two or three colleagues, day after day, always before breakfast, starting at the crack of dawn—"when our brains were fresh". Later in the day, it used to be my job to report to the Prime Minister on the morning's discussions.

Sheikh Abdullah listened, argued, agreed, and sometimes did not agree. Sheikh Saheb, as I have said, was worried about the communal tension in both India and Pakistan. It was obvious that he knew less about the brutalities perpetrated against the Hindus in, what was then, East Bengal, because we had all along played these stories down in our press to avoid possible retaliation against the minority community in India. But this brought the Sheikh back, more and more, to his one topic, secularism, the need for Hindu-Muslim amity—and all the greater need, he very legitimately kept pressing, for *some* accord with Pakistan. I remember his getting more than a little annoyed with me, when I told him one day that he need not imagine that he had anything like a monopoly on this question of the need for "some accord" with Pakistan. I was outspoken and perhaps tactless, when I told him that some of us had burnt a lot of fingers trying to bring about an understanding with Pakistan, "while you were sitting pretty in your beloved jail in Jammu". Sheikh laughed and said, "Oh, yes, Mr. Gundevia, I have loved being in jail all these years, in case you don't know!"

Abdullah did not make too many speeches during the week that he was in Delhi but for once he had a fair press. He wanted to meet some of the leaders outside Delhi. He went to Wardha and there met Acharya Vinoba Bhave and Jayaprakash

Narain. From Wardha he went on to Madras and met Rajagopalachari. In Madras he made a statement that, among other things, Rajaji had suggested a possible solution of the Kashmir problem.

When he returned to Delhi after his tour down south, Sheikh Abdullah put forward before the Prime Minister the idea of a possible Confederation—a Confederation of India, Pakistan and Kashmir which, it was obvious, Rajaji had suggested.

The Sheikh himself seemed very keen on trying out the idea on President Ayub of Pakistan. The Prime Minister wanted us to have the legal and international angles of the concept of a Confederation carefully analysed and examined. But the story was to be kept very much under the hat.

When copious notes had been prepared on this new, magic formula, a "Confederation", I summed it up for the Prime Minister, in brief, as follows : (a) in history no Confederation has ever worked; (b) I was a hundred-to-one certain that Ayub would never agree; he would be far too scared of losing Pakistan through a process of disintegration; (c) since Ayub was *sure* to turn down the proposition, we should not turn it down; and finally, (d) that Sheikh Abdullah, since he was so keen, should be allowed to try and persuade Ayub to accept a Confederation, draw a blank, and learn for himself who it was that was intransigent—was it always India, or was it sometimes Pakistan also ? (This is not to say that Abdullah had accused us in any of these discussions of being "intransigent".)

In our early morning discussions, we talked unendingly about a possible Confederation, without going into too many legalities of the case. I kept pressing that there was no chance of Ayub ever accepting the idea. We were keen on selling only one item in the Sheikh's important market—a modified Cease Fire Line as the International Boundary. Sheikh alone could sell it to Ayub. It was, as so often in history, a *near miss*. An International Line, Sheikh Abdullah said, should be "the last resort". He would first try for a Confederation.

Sheikh Abdullah went back to Srinagar in mid-May. He was to return to Delhi and go to Pakistan in the last week of

the month. At the A.I.C.C. Session in Bombay on 15 May, Jawaharlal Nehru said that if Sheikh Abdullah could help the two countries to improve their relations, "he will have done a great service to both countries". He declined to go into the details of his talks with the Sheikh "at this stage"; but he said that Sheikh Abdullah had talked even more about relations between India and Pakistan than about Kashmir. "We did not arrive at any clear solution of this problem, but various suggestions were made. Some of these suggestions appear to be difficult in the present circumstances, even though ultimately they may be found to be acceptable by both countries." (*Asian Recorder*, 1964, P. 5857).

And so we approach *Zero Hour*.

Sheikh Abdullah was back in Delhi on May 21. We had our last early morning session the next day, which was a Friday. Someone came to call us; the Prime Minister was waiting for us to start breakfast. We all moved upstairs from the garden and into the small dining room where we sat down to breakfast. There was no Leonardo Da Vinci in the company present to paint "The Last Supper !"

At 9.30 we moved on to Vigyan Bhavan for the Prime Minister's periodic Press Conference. After an hour of a light-hearted question-and-answer session, someone said, "Sir, you haven't still appointed your successor !" Back came the answer, "I have no intention of passing away very soon."

We drove back to the Ministry. In the afternoon I saw the Prime Minister again, to tell him that I was going to Rangoon the next day, Saturday, 23 May. He was going to Dehra Dun for a rest.

I left early morning the next day for Calcutta and Rangoon. The Prime Minister went to Dehra Dun. Sheikh Abdullah flew to Rawalpindi. G. Parthasarathi had already gone back to Karachi.

Sheikh Abdullah did not make himself particularly popular in Pakistan on this his first visit—though he was reported to have received a tumultuous welcome on his arrival in Rawalpindi on 24 May, on what was to be a sixteen-day visit. He was received at Chaklala airport by no less a person than Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Ayub's Foreign Minister, Habibullah Khan,

Minister for Home and Kashmir Affairs and some important personalities of Azad Kashmir. The "tumultuous welcome", as the Pakistan press described it, was the obvious result of our having built up the Sheikh as the arch pro-Pakistan conspirator. The Sheikh was accompanied on this visit to Pakistan by Mirza Afzal Beg and Maulana Massoudi.

The glamour, however, did not last long. Sheikh Abdullah declared on arrival that it was his firm belief that the salvation of the people of Kashmir lay in the permanent friendship of India and Pakistan. In the three days that he was in Rawalpindi, Sheikh made several statements before and after his meeting with President Ayub and addressed a public meeting on 25 May. His repeated references to the secular character of India and the need to strengthen India's secular forces tarnished the "conspiratorial" image, almost immediately.

The Dawn said that "Sheikh Abdullah's statements and his references to India's so-called secularism have caused a certain amount of disappointment among the public, in general, and the intelligentsia, in particular." The same paper accused him of having shifted his emphasis from demanding a solution of the Kashmir dispute to promoting Indo-Pakistan relations (a crime in Pakistan?). Other Pakistani newspapers sang the same refrain in a changed major or minor key. The disappointment was obvious.

But what happened to the idea of a Confederation? Sheikh Abdullah apparently mentioned this to Ayub at his first meeting with the President. Ayub turned it down, out of hand. The Sheikh may be assumed to have been more than a little disappointed. The second card he played on Ayub (which he had not discussed with us in Delhi), was to suggest a summit meeting between President Ayub and Prime Minister Nehru. This he apparently succeeded in persuading Ayub to accept. At a news conference in Rawalpindi he declared, on 26 May, that President Ayub and Jawaharlal Nehru were expected to meet in New Delhi in June in an attempt to end the 17 year old dispute over Kashmir. He was reported to have added that his immediate objective of bringing about a meeting between President Ayub and Jawaharlal Nehru had been achieved and he was returning to India a very happy man.

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Before our High Commissioner could cable his comments on this to us, Jawaharlal Nehru was dead—on the next day, 27 May.

Sheikh Abdullah called off his tour of the rest of Pakistan and Azad Kashmir, as soon as he heard of the death of his friend. He addressed a condolence meeting, I think, in Muzaffarabad, drove back to Rawalpindi to see Ayub and returned to Delhi on 28 May for the funeral. I came back from Rangoon on the night of 27 May.

The first public mention of any talk of a Confederation was made by President Ayub Khan. While inaugurating some divisional Muslim League conference on 31 May (four days after Nehru's demise) President Ayub was reported to have said that he had conveyed to Sheikh Abdullah, during their talks with him in Rawalpindi, his opposition to a Federation or a Confederation of India and Pakistan.

Since Ayub had turned it down, as definitely expected by us, the story was dead. But Ayub Khan raked it up in his book, *Friends Not Masters* (Oxford University Press, Pakistan Branch, 1967). On P. 128 he says :

When Sheikh Abdullah and Mirza Afzal Beg came to Pakistan in 1964, they (too) had brought the absurd proposal of a confederation between India, Pakistan and Kashmir. I told him plainly we should have nothing to do with it. It was curious that whereas we were seeking the salvation of Kashmiris, they had been forced to mention an idea which, if pursued, would lead to our enslavement. It was clear that this was what Mr. Nehru had told them to say to us...

When Sheikh Abdullah's attention was drawn to this passage in President Ayub's book, he promptly wrote a letter to the President, on 1 September, 1967. Sheikh said in this letter :

We never carried any cut and dry proposal for the solution of the Kashmir dispute and, to be fair to the late Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, he never forced us to put before you any particular proposal. No, we are not made that way...Of course, this particular proposal was vehemently denounced by you...My advice to you, however, was not to reject any proposal outright, but discuss its pros and cons in a friendly manner at a conference table and convince the other side that a particular solution would not lead to ultimate peace which ought to be the common objective of all...You were kind enough to agree to come to Delhi and meet late Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru but, to our misfortune, his sad and untimely death robbed us of this opportunity.

Shastriji, The Sheikh and The Haj

There was no rapport between Lal Bahadur Shastri, the new Prime Minister, and Abdullah. One day, many weeks after Lal Bahadurji had taken over the reins of office, I asked Sheikh Saheb if he had had any talks with the new Prime Minister or any one else in the Government, and his reply was : "Whom do I talk to, I don't know any one in this Government, except Indiraji." Indira Gandhi had by then taken over as Minister for Information and Broadcasting.

Mridula Sarabhai told me one day that Sheikh Saheb had written a letter to Shastriji when he was recovering from his first heart attack, but Shastriji had not so much as had this acknowledged. Hundreds of letters and telegrams, naturally, had been received when the Prime Minister fell ill, and hundreds of acknowledgements had been sent, several by the Prime Minister's office and, later, several under the Prime Minister's signature.

When I saw him the next day while he was still in bed, I asked him about Sheikh Saheb's letter. He said he had seen it and admitted it had not been acknowledged. I told him this was wrong and he must write to the Sheikh, and I pressed on him the need to open a dialogue with him. Strangely enough, he said to me, "What am I to say to him?" I told him that Abdullah had a lot to say to Nehru and Nehru, apparently, had a lot to say to Abdullah, not very long ago, and the dialogue just had to be resumed. The Sheikh's letter was acknowledged by the Prime Minister that same day, but I doubt if they met after Shastriji recovered and gradually resumed his duties.

After a blank period of more than six months, some time in January 1965 came a request from Sheikh Abdullah that he be permitted to go on a pilgrimage, on *Haj*, to Mecca. Should he be allowed to go, or should he not be allowed to go? The

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matter was debated at some length. I, of course, pressed that he should be allowed to go. The matter was discussed in the Cabinet and it was finally decided that he should be allowed to go. The same passport, in which Sheikh Abdullah had put himself down as a "Kashmiri Muslim", and which, I think, had originally been endorsed only for Pakistan, was now endorsed for a number of other countries.

I handed over charge as Foreign Secretary on 5 February, 1965, and went over to the President's Secretariat.

Sheikh Abdullah accompanied by his wife and Mirza Afzal Beg left Bombay in the first week of March on what turned out to be quite a tour of Europe and other countries, which was to end with the pilgrimage to Mecca.

Reports started pouring in of what the Sheikh said in London and what Sheikh Abdullah said in this, that and the other place. Eyebrows were, of course, raised in Delhi. There were hundreds of "I-told-you-sos" and "Didn't-I-tell-you-sos". Sheikh Abdullah contradicted some reports and did not bother to contradict others.

The Sheikh has invariably suffered from either having a pretty poor secretariat and, for far too many years, no secretariat at all. A politician without secretariat assistance (how they hate the idea !) usually does one of two things : says the wrong thing at the wrong time; or says the right thing at the wrong time. Only on rare occasions does he say the right thing at the right time.

It would be futile to sort out what the Sheikh actually said on this tour of his or what he did not say. He crowned it all by going to Algiers, of all places, where the preliminaries to the Second Asian-African Conference were going on and there meeting Chou En-lai. I have said, earlier, that when he came out of jail in May 1964, we could not help feeling that he was very out of touch with the world. He had, of course, been in jail right through the 1962 debacle against the Chinese.

Chou En-lai had been going about all over Algiers as the stark enemy of India—because India was the enemy of China, according to Chou. If the Sheikh had had a single, even amateu-

rish, secretary to advise him, the latter would never have allowed him to call on Chou En-lai. The Sheikh, if he reads this book, will undoubtedly say that it is the bureaucrat in me, now talking; and he is quite right. Long afterwards, when he was under "house arrest" in Delhi, I asked him why he had called on Chou En-lai in Algiers. Sheikh Abdullah perfectly innocently said to me, "I did not ask to see him. Chou En-lai sent me an invitation, so I went and saw him. What was wrong with that ? After all, Kashmir has a common border with China, hasn't it ?" That simple, it was, and I am sure he still looks at it with the same simplicity. But how many people outside Jammu and Kashmir are prepared to call him "innocent" or "simple" ?

Sheikh Abdullah, it would seem, had filled his cup in his first four weeks out of India. His occasional indiscretions or equivocations were applauded in Pakistan and by Pakistani Embassies abroad, and loudly decried in India. The Jana Sangh, in the Parliament in Delhi, was up in arms and was properly out for his blood, once again.

The Foreign Minister, Sardar Swaran Singh, made a statement in Parliament on 5 April, 1965, in which he said that Sheikh Abdullah's conduct "in seeking China's support" in regard to Kashmir was "a highly prejudicial act" and his acceptance of Mr. Chou En-lai's invitation to visit China was "extremely objectionable". To cut his tour short, the Foreign Minister said, Sheikh Abdullah had been informed (presumably through our Embassy in Jeddah where the Sheikh then was) that the validity of his passport would be terminated as on 30 April, which, it was expected, would enable him to complete the Haj. All other endorsements on the passport, other than those necessary for the purpose of the Haj, he was also told, were being cancelled.

There was considerable speculation in various circles on how Sheikh Abdullah was likely to react on receiving these orders. Would he return to India before 30 April or deliberately delay his return and thus court arrest ? One view, very cleverly whispered around, was that Abdullah would not return to India

at all and that he would, instead, seek political asylum in Pakistan—and that Pakistan had made him this offer. The official world would have heaved a sigh of relief if he had really disappeared into Pakistan and “proved”, once and for all, the case against him that they had not been able to prove in twenty years.

We have seen how Nehru’s letter had reached him with some delay when he was released from the Jammu jail in 1964. This clever little ploy was repeated, this time in the reverse direction. Sheikh Abdullah maintains that on receiving the Government’s orders he wrote a letter to Lal Bahadur Shastri, explaining how he was not going to be able to return before 30 April if he was to complete his Mecca pilgrimage; and he had, in this letter, also expressed his anxiety to meet the Prime Minister and explain various matters to him on his return. This letter was handed over to our Embassy in Jeddah. Shastri said, later, that he had never received any such letter from Sheikh Abdullah. The result was that the Sheikh was seven days late getting back.

The sordid story started all over again. On 7 May, 1965, as his aircraft touched down at Palam airport, Sheikh Abdullah was served with an order under the Defence of India Rules and taken away to Ootacamund, a pretty enough hill station in the far south but which probably made him all the more nostalgic for his beloved Vale of Kashmir. In Ooty, his movements were to be confined to the municipal limits of the town. Later he was moved to Kodicanal.

Although a longish *White Paper* was issued, listing Sheikh Abdullah’s misdeeds abroad, with particular emphasis on his meeting with Chou En-lai in Algiers, this action under the Defence of India Rules was an admission that, this time, no attempt was going to be made to “prove” anything against the accused. The authorities had had enough of that farce. The other convenient factor now in operation was that the Ministry of External Affairs had practically abdicated from its responsibilities regarding Kashmir—and, of course, there was no Nehru to come in the way. Kashmir was being handled by the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Pakistan was, about this time, on the rampage in Kutch. This may have been the only seeming legitimacy for putting Sheikh Abdullah away in cold storage in the south. At the time of the Chinese attack, in 1962, Sheikh Abdullah was in jail in Jammu. It is a significant coincidence, that during this war with Pakistan, in 1965, Sheikh was, once again, a little out of touch with the world, incommunicado, sitting by himself in Kodi or Ooty or wherever he was.

The war ended quickly enough. But there was a long wait—a stalemate. Then came Tashkent—Lal Bahadur Shastri's Trafalgar : but Shastriji died on 10 January, 1966. Indira Gandhi was sworn in as Prime Minister on 19 January. Months went by—with nothing done. I was all along reminded of a foreign correspondent's verdict over another crisis : "the Government of India never acts; it only *reacts*."

On 12 April, 1967, when Sheikh Abdullah had been put away in Kodi for 23 months, an appeal for his release was issued by several prominent people, including C. Rajagopalachari, C.D. Deshmukh, G.L. Mehta and some Members of Parliament. This said, among other things :

Detention without trial for indefinite periods, of men with deep convictions, not only defeats its avowed purpose, but is utterly repugnant to all democratic principles and practices. Our appeal for the release of Sheikh Abdullah rests on the simple but unchallengeable basis of civil liberty.

This dignified language, under the signature of some of our elder statesmen did, apparently, have some effect, though admittedly in slow motion.

In July 1967 Abdullah was brought to Delhi, to the Medical Institute—because he was suffering from diabetes and other ailments and was later moved to a bungalow at Kotla Lane in New Delhi. Some months later they made some relaxation in the restrictions imposed on him in that he was given permission to move about in the Union Territory of Delhi; but he was still barred from granting any press interviews, addressing meetings or receiving foreign visitors without the permission of the Deputy Commissioner. Sheikh Abdullah refused to avail himself of the facility of the freedom of

movement in the Union Territory and did not seek permission to meet pressmen. On 25 December a further order allowed him to meet the press and foreign visitors and address public meetings, but he again refused to avail of these small mercies, because his movements were still restricted to Delhi. On 2 January 1968, he was at last a free man again. All restrictions on him were removed and he was allowed to leave Delhi and go anywhere he pleased, not excluding his home state of Jammu and Kashmir.

From 7 May, 1965, to 2 January, 1968, makes almost two years and eight months.

It is at this point in the story of Sheikh Abdullah that the "Interview" begins—the Sheikh's "Testament", which forms the first part of this book. If I had come upon this detailed Interview that I am introducing in this book five years ago, I would have been glad to call a halt at this point in time; but as I have come upon it a little late, I must reluctantly go on to bring matters up to date—and so I continue with the unpleasant story.

1968 and After

Sheikh Abdullah was again a free man for the three years that followed. With the muzzle removed he went back to his dual theme, stressing the need for Hindu-Muslim unity and secularism, on the one hand, and friendship with Pakistan as a prerequisite to a solution, on the other.

I have said earlier that Sheikh Saheb, having been in jail right through the war with China in 1962 and for almost eighteen months thereafter, was unaware of the depth of feeling in the country against China. There is a peculiar parallel in his thinking and conduct towards Pakistan after his internment in Kodi and his continuing house-arrest, thereafter, from 1965 to his final release in January 1968.

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto had accompanied President Ayub unwillingly to Tashkent and he had been an unwilling party to the Agreement arrived at in Tashkent. On his return, with Shastri dead, he was bent upon seeing only one element of the Tashkent Agreement through and opposed the implementation of everything else, treating it as a scrap of paper only fit for the waste paper basket. Pakistan had never announced its casualty figures and never told its people that the country had lost nearly a thousand square miles of territory which the Indian troops had occupied across the Cease Fire Line and the international boundary. The withdrawal of troops, back to the Cease Fire Line and the international boundary by 28 February, was the first part of the Tashkent Agreement. Bhutto maintained a sullen silence till the troop withdrawals had been carried out. Once this was accomplished, with the military *status quo* established, Bhutto started an open campaign against the Agreement. He used Tashkent as an important issue in his crusade against Ayub and finally succeeded in compelling Ayub to bow out of the scene in Pakistan. With a patently unintelligent Yahya Khan as the

new military dictator, Bhutto now had a free hand in Pakistan's external relations and, to a lesser extent, in the country's domestic policies also. The virulent "hate-India" campaign came up in a rising crescendo across the desert to disappointed listeners in Delhi. Tashkent was at the bottom of the basket.

In this foul atmosphere Abdullah, a little too consistently preaching friendship with Pakistan as also maintaining his friendly contacts with the Pakistan High Commissioner in New Delhi, was viewed with immense suspicion. His equally consistent emphasis on Hindu-Muslim unity was looked upon as only a cloak for his "pro-Pakistan" predilections.

In October 1968 Sheikh Abdullah tried to organise an All-Party Convention to seek a solution of the Kashmir issue. The Government looked on this move with its usual suspicion. Some 250 or more persons attended the Convention, but both wings of the Congress stayed away and so did, of course, the Jana Sangh and the Swatantra Party.

Jayprakash Narain, inaugurating the Convention, was unequivocal in his stand that after the 1965 war with Pakistan any solution of Kashmir could only be found "within the framework of the Indian Union". He reiterated this in a public meeting on 11 October, explaining that no Central Government, today or in future, could allow any part of the country to break away from the Union. Newspaper reports said that this was received badly by the Srinagar audience and was said to have annoyed the Sheikh, who wanted all options to be kept open for discussion at least in the Convention, if any agreement was to be brought about with the dissident elements.

The eight day session ended on 18 October by the Convention adopting a resolution affirming that any solution of the Kashmir question that is to be acceptable to the people of the State must keep in mind the interests of all the regions of the State. Only such a solution, the resolution emphasized, could resolve the dispute and restore normalcy and tranquillity in Jammu and Kashmir and in the subcontinent.

The Convention required the Steering Committee to tabulate the different viewpoints on the issue of the State's political

future as reflected in the various papers and speeches of the delegates and submit them for discussion at the second session of the Convention, which was to be held as early as possible in order to pave the way for a "peaceful, democratic, just, realistic and lasting solution" of the Kashmir problem.

Officially, all attendance had been strictly discouraged and I remember seeing more than one handout doled out to the press, describing the Convention as a complete fiasco. But we must still give the Sadiq government in Srinagar some credit for allowing the Convention to go its own way.

The second session of the Jammu and Kashmir People's Convention was held from June 8 to 13, 1971, presided over by Sheikh Abdullah himself. In his inaugural address he covered almost every aspect of the Kashmir problem, past and present, but his major emphasis was, again, on two issues: that peace and harmony between India and Pakistan were imperative (he was, of course, speaking before the war with Pakistan in December, 1971); and, secondly, that there could be no solution that did not strengthen the secular and democratic forces that stood for equal rights to members of all religious communities, both in Kashmir and the rest of India.

The newspapers gave scant coverage to this second Convention: but at least one newspaper (*The Statesman*) reported that out of 62 "solutions" suggested for ultimate consideration, only one demand was for merger with Pakistan.

One thing was as clear as daylight: Sheikh was not encouraging the secessionist minority, however small. Six months later, when the authorities again threw Sheikh Abdullah out of Kashmir, it was suggested, among other things, that secessionist activities had been on the increase. If one reads the detailed reports of the second Convention prepared and publicised by the Plebiscite Front, one gets exactly the opposite view. The Sheikh, it seemed to me, permitted the extremists to let off steam and to realise for themselves that they were in a hopeless minority. If anything, I would call this the Sheikh's way of "containing" the secessionists.

Everything, however, was soon to be overshadowed by events in India and Pakistan.

In the second half of 1970, the only topic of interest in India was the future of the ruling party, the Indian National Congress. Was it going to be Indira Gandhi, left-of-centre, or was it going to be the right wing elements (too many of the old stalwarts in their sixties) that were to come on top. The lady Prime Minister, taking the mammoth by his tusks, dissolved Parliament on 17 December, 1970, called a mid-term poll, and was returned to power with an overwhelming, more-than-two-thirds majority in March, 1971.

The principal question in Kashmir in December was : would Sheikh Abdullah and his followers participate in the forthcoming elections, or stay out ? The Sheikh, it may be explained, was never formally a member of the Plebiscite Front. The all important question was, would the Plebiscite Front come into the fray or not ?

The Sheikh explains in a statement he issued later in March 1971, that a number of his friends in Delhi and the well-wishers of the people of Kashmir had advised them in the two years that followed his release in 1968 that he should participate in the legislature and parliamentary elections. After giving the matter a great deal of thought, he says, he advised the Plebiscite Front to contest the elections and decided to file his nomination papers himself.

The local response was unprecedented and the very large attendance at the public meetings organised by the Plebiscite Front unnerved the ruling party. They were convinced that the Sheikh's men and the Plebiscite Front would sweep the polls if they contested the elections and no other party would stand any chance against them.

Sheikh Abdullah had been removed from office, tried on charges, released when these could not be proved, imprisoned again, kept under house arrest and again released. Kashmir, the rest of India and the world was used to all this. This sordid routine could be once again repeated—why not ? All that was to be done was to throw the Sheikh and some others out of Kashmir, declare the Plebiscite Front an illegal organisation, jail as many of the members as possible, and then go through the farce of elections—and the ruling party could come back and remain in power

for ever and ever. This, out of contest, seems unbelievable in our democratic, nay, in our ultra-democratic India; but this is exactly what was done by the ruling party in Kashmir, and with the complete blessings of the Government of India.

This is how the drama was enacted : Sheikh Abdullah, Mirza Afzal Beg and the Sheikh's son-in-law, G.M. Shah, were in Delhi and about to board an aircraft for Srinagar on the morning of January 8, 1971. A little before the plane was scheduled to leave, a bomb scare was created and the flight cancelled. Apparently, the formal orders of externment were not ready.' The next morning, on 9 January, as the party was about to leave (Afzal Beg probably by car) they were served with an order under the Maintenance of Public Order Act of Jammu & Kashmir, prohibiting them from entering the State of Jammu and Kashmir.

Three days later, with the Lion in cold storage, the Plebiscite Front was declared an "unlawful association" by the Government of India, under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act, which had been extended to Jammu and Kashmir two months earlier. According to newspaper reports, in a night long swoop throughout the Valley the police rounded up hundreds of members of the Front. Offices of the organisation were taken possession of all over the State. Subsequently, the State Assembly passed a law declaring all the members of the Front ineligible to contest the elections, thus debarring a million people (which the Front claimed was its membership) from standing as candidates in the elections. Under this piece of legislation, as Mirza Afzal Beg emphasised in a statement he issued on 5 February, 1971, though a person may have ceased to be a member of the outlawed organisation at the actual time of the elections, or may have disowned the organisation or dissociated from it, the disqualification was there and was permanent.

One could go on and on with this story, but enough is always enough, in everything. And yet I am again tempted to ask, why did we ever talk about "democracy" in Kashmir in 1947 ? If we had not, we would not have made a running farce of this much sanctified word.

We have seen how so many people, after Nehru's death, have come forward to prove their mighty role in Kashmir affairs. A very good colleague of mine, who held the rank of a Director on the Kashmir desk under me in the Ministry of External Affairs, and who is unfortunately no longer with us, has written three entire books on Kashmir after his retirement. His second book, *Kashmir Awakes* which was clearly meant to denigrate Sheikh Abdullah, proudly concludes that "Abdullah is a blank cartridge, a spent force and a paper tiger...." Mao Tse-tung spent a long time trying to teach his people that paper tigers are not something to be frightened of. In a democracy, there are plenty of paper tigers but they are allowed to fight elections—and lose their deposits. However, when Sheikh Abdullah threatens to fight an election, for the first time in years, he is banished from Kashmir, obviously because of the fear that he would not lose his deposit—and the other side might. What does that make him—a paper tiger or is he still the Lion of Kashmir? Jug him and jail him as long as you like: the longer you jug him the mightier is his roar.

I saw the Sheikh twice in August and September of that year, when he was back in the same house in New Delhi (3, Kotla Lane). He asked me this one question with some mild, legitimate bitterness: "What do you want me to do? You have always told me that I must come in and take over responsibilities. This time I decided to fight a democratic election. If I had been elected, I would have had to swear by the Indian Constitution. But you see, they won't even let me come in constitutionally."

The mid-term poll was over in March. The Congress, under Indira Gandhi, came in with a thumping majority in state after state all over India, and in Kashmir also—with the Sheikh and the Front out of the picture. While all the bells pealed for this resounding victory, the misery of Kashmir could very well be forgotten.

The ban on entering Kashmir (the externment order) against Mirza Afzal Beg was lifted on 11 May, and against Sheikh Abdullah on 5 June.

Pakistan was hotting up, once again, by then. Yahya Khan had proclaimed war on his own subjects in East Bengal. With refugees pouring into India from the east, in their millions, despite the horror stories portrayed by western journalists, the world, presided over by the Statue of Liberty in New York, called it an "internal matter". But with the refugee figure fast approaching the ten million mark, war clouds began to gather on the horizon; and on 5 December, 1971, Pakistan, in an innocent attempt to solve its "internal" problem, attacked India's vital airfields in the western sector. The war was on.

In 1965, it was a three weeks' war. This time it was, mercifully, only two weeks. On 16 December came the surrender of the Pakistani army in the east and Bangladesh was liberated. Indira Gandhi, in her hour of victory, called for a Cease Fire. Yahya Khan accepted the offer, very kindly, and the hostilities came to an end.

After the ten million had trudged back to their devastated homes and their ruined villages, nearly seven months after the cease fire, came Mr. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto to Simla, in July 1972. Came also the Simla Agreement—with Mr. Bhutto, of all persons, talking "principles" all the way and all the time.

With Pakistan cut to size (and it was a small size, less than half in weight of population) would the dissident minority in Kashmir now stop talking, specially since the Muslims of Bangladesh had exploded Pakistan's two-nation theory sky high? Would anyone in Delhi have time to give Kashmir a thought, make the Sheikh talk and listen to what he had to say about the facts of life?

I have not asked how it started, but not very long before the Simla talks with Mr. Bhutto, a small news item in the press said that G. Parthasarathy was holding a quiet dialogue with Sheikh Abdullah and Mirza Afzal Beg on the possible solution of the Kashmir problem. There was little doubt in my mind that G.P. was the only man who could talk to the Sheikh.

The dialogue is still going on, but in very slow motion—far too slow.

The Sheikh told me in February and March, 1973, months after the dialogue started, that he had left everything to his lieutenant, Mirza Afzal Beg. But the point is, after so much bitterness, is anything possible or not? My own opinion is that a settlement *is* possible, if both sides try.

The Sheikh's stand today is that he abides by everything that was said and done upto August 1953, when he was removed from office and jailed unceremoniously. Indira Gandhi has said quite often, that there is no going back on history, as far as Kashmir's accession to India is concerned. Kashmir's accession, she declared more dramatically in a public meeting in Srinagar on 15 July, 1970, was part of history. History was not like a child's slate on which something could be written and then wiped off. History could not be re-written at will, she said.

The Sheikh says that he entirely agrees with the Prime Minister; but a very important—or the most important—part of the history of Kashmir was written in the Instrument of Accession, on the basis of which Kashmir's accession was accepted by India; and this, as we have seen, limits the powers of the Government of India to three subjects, Defence, External Affairs and Communications. This, in turn, the Sheikh reminds us, was enshrined in the Delhi Agreement, and it was the Sheikh himself who, on the basis of the Delhi Agreement, brought Kashmir into the Indian Union, proudly persuading his people to embrace "secular India", repudiating, in no mistaken language, Pakistan's "two nation" theory. This is also history—and it is not a child's slate that can be wiped clean at anybody's will and pleasure.

I, for one, see a lot of common ground in their mutual stand, if both sides agree that the slate of history cannot be wiped clean. But I have also been telling Sheikh Abdullah, that another equally important truth, just one more fact of life, is that Time does not stand still either. The big wheel, the wheel of Time, is moving irreversibly forward—and we are all getting old. Indira may be young—which is an advantage that she has over many of us who were once in the picture.

I keep reminding the Sheikh, that he will soon be 68. Jawaharlal Nehru is dead—and we will all be dead, soon, if we don't hurry up.

There is light at the end of the tunnel, and therefore there is definitely a way out of the tunnel—this murky, rusty, 20 year old tunnel into which we have allowed ourselves to be enticed.

By all means let us try and go back to August, 1953. But I have told Sheikh Saheb, more than once, that it would not be right to take it for granted, or treat it as an axiom, that all the water that has flowed under the bridges over the beautiful Jhelum in the last twenty years, is necessarily only dirty water. There may be a lot of muck, but there is seasonal muck in every river—not only in the beautiful Jhelum. There is good and bad in history, and we *have* to sort it out, the good from the bad, the wheat and the chaff.

The way out seems simple enough, even if it may not seem so when one comes down to brass tacks. The bone of contention is the multitude of laws passed by the Central legislature that have been made operative in Kashmir, with the concurrence of the Kashmir legislature, where the State legislature concurrence was necessary. The Sheikh and his friends maintain that the State legislature, after his ouster in 1953, has never properly represented the people, since the elections were always “rigged”. Sheikh Abdullah cannot be expected to hold any other views on the subject after the State Government performances during the last mid-term elections, culminating in his banishment from the State just prior to the elections.

But what about separating the wheat from the chaff?

The Sheikh's stand, repeated often enough in various statements after his return to Kashmir from his last banishment, amounts to this: Kashmir's accession to India stands, but it was based on the Instrument of Accession; and its subsequent ratification by the Kashmir Constituent Assembly was based on the Delhi Agreement, which limited the powers of the Government of India to three subjects, Defence,

External Affairs and Communications. Therefore, all laws passed by the Central Legislature directly bearing on these three subjects he, presumably, would not challenge.

If all the laws passed by the Central Legislature that have been applied to Kashmir after August 1953 were listed, it would surely not be difficult to sort out the laws bearing on these three subjects. We might list these as category I; all these laws in Category I are wheat and cannot be termed chaff. This is clear and not dirty water past the bridges.

Then from the rest, Sheikh Saheb or Beg Saheb have to examine the full list, afresh, and tell the Government of India's negotiator, G. Parthasarathy, what laws they can see no objection to. A lot of laws have been applied to Kashmir that have benefited the people of Kashmir. These acceptable laws we would call Category II. Still clear water.

This would leave us a residual list of legislation which we could call Category III. It is only this residual list that both sides should agree to call "negotiable" or to be negotiated. There will naturally be several stumbling blocks in this difficult category, but both sides could and must agree to discuss these with an open mind.

There are two wide open crevasses in this very icy Category III, which will need skilful negotiation—for instance, the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court and the jurisdiction of the Election Commission. There are bound to be others also. The Sheikh has some legitimate knives in the body of the Election Commission. But the knives have to be, can be, pulled out gently and the wounds allowed to heal.

The Supreme Court, Sheikh Abdullah has said, is too expensive a luxury for the poor Kashmiri peasant. But the Kashmiri peasant is not poorer than the peasant in Ramnad, sitting many hundred miles further away from Delhi, or a Konyak tribal Naga on the Burma border in Nagaland. An amateur solution, suggested more than once, might be for the Supreme Court to be persuaded to visit the far away places in this very vast India on some sort of a circuit. If the Sheikh tells you, in an undertone, that the Supreme Court is politically motivated

against "genuine Kashmiri interests", my answer, when someone told me this, was that I always thought that the Supreme Court was supposed to be politically motivated against the socialist philosophy of Indira Gandhi. If the Supreme Court judges are now also said to be motivated against the Plebiscite Front, then a very fair view would be that, two minus two being exactly equal to zero, the judges are completely unmotivated, "uncommitted", as the present-day phraseology would have it. If the Supreme Court has given one judgement, shall we say, against Mridula Sarabhai, surely G.P. could collect several judgements that have gone bodily in favour of a number of Kashmiris who may have been taken before the Supreme Court, or who may have themselves gone to the Court for redress otherwise.

Most of us are sure that a lot of legislation in Category III will and can pass muster, if there is a genuine effort on both sides to reduce the sphere of conflict, the size or the magnitude of the conflict.

What could follow after the area of conflict has been reduced to the minimum would be important. Sheikh once told me : "Who am I to bind my people to anything ? Who am I to give commitments to the Government of India ? What authority have I..." The answer is, of course, that he is *not* a paper tiger, *not* a spent force, and is *not* a blank cartridge. The lion has ample authority, not only in the Valley of Kashmir, but also in the surrounding jungles and even in the high altitude snows. We know that and the Sheikh knows that. He has claimed that authority and the people of Kashmir have provided ample proof of their faith in him and in his leadership. We cannot let him run away from his responsibilities.

The only trouble today is the pace of the negotiations. I was told in Delhi, in April 1973, that a list not very different from the categories of legislation I have suggested above, has in fact already been compiled. If Beg Saheb as the principal negotiator would come out with his version of a Category II, it would reduce the residue, which is to be Category III, and progress would be possible, leaving only the thorns for negotiations.

Time, in this, is on nobody's side. Those of us who know the story backwards are fast getting old. It would be grossly unfair to leave to the next generation the complications that we have created.

Indira Gandhi has proved herself to be a powerful leader and a powerful Prime Minister—by any dictionary meaning of the word. If any one has the requisite authority and the power to sort out the various problems of the Kashmir issue to the satisfaction of both the Government of India and the chosen leader of the Kashmiri people, it is she. And if she *can* do it, she must do it *now*.

POSTSCRIPT

by Y D Gundevia

Six months ago, when I was finishing this Monograph on Sheikh Abdullah, I wrote that the sands were running out, that Time was on nobody's side and that we must get on with it.

But now, six months later, I am wondering if I was being impatient. In our unending talks with Pakistan in 1963, I remember complaining that we were being "pushed" (by our Amercian and British friends) and when, nearing the fifth round of talks in Karachi, they came out with some sort of a "formula", I accused them of interference. I still maintain that if others had kept out, the talks might not have ended with the sixth round in Delhi in May, 1963. It was the same when I was talking to our "underground" Naga friends from September-October 1964 to May 1965. "How long do you propose to go on talking to them?" I always used to be asked, each time I came back from Chadema and Khensa, always with very little to report, very little to satisfy a hungry Press. I wanted no time limits. Why should we not go on talking? "As long as we talk, nobody is shooting anybody else"—this was always my consolation.

When the Geneva Conference on Indo-China went on and on, in 1954, with all their Hotel rooms booked indefinitely, and so many villas and castles occupied, equally indefinitely, by giant delegations from England and France, the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R., the Swiss were getting really frantic. I remember an important Hotel manager asking me: "But, Mr. Gundevia, when do you think they will finish talking? We are losing all our international tourist traffic for the season!" My answer was: "Yes, I realise that; you make chronometers in Switzerland and a fraction of a second means a lot to you. But we go by the sun, you know, in the east. The day begins, when the sun comes upon the eastern horizon. We know it is midday

when it gets too hot. Our day is over when the good sun goes down in the west. What's your hurry?" The Swiss having learnt their lessons in 1954, when the Laos Conference went on and on, nine years later, in 1963, they were perfectly reconciled to the interminable "gabfest."

And so, sitting a thousand miles from Delhi, and very much further removed from Kashmir, and with so little said in the newspapers, six months later I am teaching myself to be patient.

Ruminating, quietly, in far away Poona, with the communal riots of May a permanent stigma on this otherwise quiet city of the Peshwas, I have often recalled a scene I had seen in my first years of service—an elephant bogged in the swamps of the swollen Ghaghra river on the Barabanki border in East U.P. It was a difficult job, getting the elephant out of the bog. But after a full thirtysix hours struggle we got the poor animal out—because we were bent on getting him out. The picture regarding Kashmir looks like a mother-elephant and her little calf, both bogged down somewhere. But if we mean to get them out, we will. No one can afford to be impatient. It is a difficult job, but we certainly seem to want to see it through, so we will. It is a little more difficult, this story, because it is not only the mother-elephant, but the baby as well, and the mother has got bogged, trying to get the baby out.

The talks are still going on between Mr. G. Parthasarathy and Mirza Afzal Beg. Sheikh Abdullah really seems to have left it to his lieutenant. He is apparently moving around in a somewhat different orbit. Is it the sharp eclipse of a comet.

In May, June and July, there was hardly one single mention of Kashmir in any one newspaper. In May, after spending some time in the valley, at least one newspaperman[†] saw a "New Hope in Kashmir".* Among other things, he said that the emergence of Bangla Desh (and I suppose also the long parleys with Pakistan that have followed, which have always shown up Pakistan very much second best) has made a dent in Kashmir and has clipped the wings of the professional Delhi-baiters in the State. The Sheikh and Mir Qasim, the article

**Times of India*, 29-30 May, 1973.

said, are making valiant efforts to come to terms—with reality. There is no “breakthrough”, we are told, but their relations are at least relaxed, if not cordial.

Asked specifically, again, the Sheikh has said that he stands by everything he had said and done up to 1953, and on the eternal question of the finality of accession, he has said, again, that it is only a question of the “quantum of accession”.

Asked if he still wants Pakistan to be a party to any settlement. Sheikh Saheb is reported to have said : “That is no longer necessary. The problem of ‘Azad’ Kashmir is there, but if we agree, we can jointly face Pakistan later. In case Pakistan fails to fall in line with our wishes, it will get isolated.” This is as it should be. I have always felt that if we can sell anything that the Sheikh can buy, then Pakistan has to accept it.

On August 22, Sheikh Abdullah addressed the Press Club of India and after the address answered a series of questions. What he said was, as usual, variously reported, but the *Times of India* version makes interesting reading.* As a “citizen of India” he would be glad to contribute in his own humble way to the solution of the problems facing the country. He agreed that there were problems beyond Kashmir. “If India goes down, Kashmir is not safe”, he said and he did not like the suggestion that he was “returning” to the national scene. He had *always* been part of the scene, since pre-independence days. He had worked shoulder to shoulder with Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. “Then something happened, which was bad luck”, he said. For many years he was prevented from any contact with the people. “After a long period of separation”, he said, “I am here again.”

Asked if he was willing to resume his efforts to bring about an understanding between India and Pakistan, Sheikh Abdullah said that the question should be put to Mrs. Gandhi. “If she places trust and confidence in me and entrusts to me any role, anywhere, that will help India to come out of this morass, I will be glad.”

Sheikh Abdullah said that he wanted all the problems between India and Pakistan to be resolved, and he was sure that India and Pakistan would eventually come closer together.

**Times of India*, 23 August, 1973.

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He was saying this, of course, with the background of the forthcoming talks between India and Pakistan on the aftermath of the 1971 war.

Queried if he would ask the Plebiscite Front to wind up, Sheikh Abdullah said, "Why bother about this, when there are so many other problems ?" He wanted newsmen to forget about Kashmir for the present.

In answer to persistent questions he said that the decision to "throw our lot with India" was "deliberate and well considered". To a Pakistani journalist he said that a plebiscite was only one of the ways of ascertaining the wishes of the people and he rubbed in the point that elections in India had taken place every five years.

On the Hindu-Muslim issue, the Sheikh said that a big segment of the people that formed the Muslim minority in India were disheartened and disappointed, and this was good neither for them nor for the country. His first attempt would be to pull them out of this despondency and make them look beyond their shell and see that another big segment in the country, for instance the Harijans, had also suffered as much. The Muslims, he felt, appeared to lack direction. He said that the Prime Minister was distressed about their difficulties and had accepted his suggestion that she should assess the Muslim feelings through leaders who had roots among them. He was asked why he had chosen to confine himself to the problems of Muslims and his answer was that he had to feel his ground, and he added, "I must be cautious".

To me all these frank discussions with the Press Club seem important. If it is the wind of change, one has to remember that the wind can change for the better and the wind can change for the worse. If there is a change in the winds in Kashmir, even if it is cold, as always in Kashmir, it would be futile to look for contradictions and to gloat over any seeming contradictions. I only see a change to a healthier atmosphere—the mother-elephant and the baby coming out of the bog.

A friend asks me: "Can your Sheikh play a bigger role in India, beyond Kashmir ?" My answer is, yes, he can.

The two big problems facing us, ever since Independence, have been Pakistan, outside India, and the question of Hindu-Muslim unity, inside India.

Pakistan has been cut down in size, true enough. But we cannot afford to sit back and gloat over the fact that Pakistan has been cut to size. A weak and, so far, very divided Pakistan as our immediate neighbour in the west, and an even more economically impoverished Bangla Desh hanging on to us in the east do not make a pretty picture of the sub-continent.

We cannot afford to concentrate our attention only on "Harijan uplift" and forget the more explosive problem, as we tend to, of the Muslim minority in the country. The Scheduled Castes are coming up, but not so the Muslim minority. To take a convenient and somewhat telling yardstick : in the competitive examinations held, this year, by the Union Public Service Commission, seven out of eleven candidates called up for interview before the Board for the Personality Test were Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe boys and girls. This means that seven out of eleven candidates that secured near 50 per cent and more marks in the written papers were from these so-called "backward classes". But in all the eleven, the Muslims were few and far between. Only three or four vacancies in 150 in the all-India services have gone this year to Muslims. This is all that a community of sixty millions could produce.

Is the Muslim community as much a "backward class" in India, twentyfive years after Independence, as the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes listed in the Constitution ? I can see my Muslim friends resenting the question. But I ask the question none the less.

The cause is, in my opinion, two-fold : The Muslims, by and large, are the poorer section of the population, and the community is leaderless. There is, yes, what we call the "Congress Muslim"; we were very rightly proud to have had a Muslim President, who was a very worthy "Congress Muslim" indeed; we have usually had a Muslim Governor in one State or the other. People outside India are very surprised when they see a Muslim as an Ambassador of India, and we flaunt

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quite a few of them in our Missions abroad, and very worthy men they are too. But who is the leader of the Muslim community in India ? Who is the leader of the Muslim community, shall we say, in North-India or South-India ? Who are the leaders of this giant minority in

“Punjaba, Sindhu, Gujarata, Maratha,
Dravida, Uttkala, Banga....”

that we sing about, so religiously ?

Can Sheikh Abdullah fill the bill ? I will not say that he should become a crusader of the community, overnight, from Kerala to Kashmir. But, yes, I will say that he can give us a helping hand.

His dual theme, I have tried to portray earlier, has always been Indo-Pakistan amity abroad and Hindu-Muslim unity at home. There are better chances of peace between India and Pakistan now than ever before. We are working for it and we want to live in peace with Pakistan. The Sheikh, I should imagine, is more than convinced of the bonafides of the Indira Gandhi government in this field, and he should therefore, all the more, give her a helping hand on this blinding beam in our eye, the Hindu-Muslim problem, which is sapping the vitality of the country, day and night.

The Sheikh himself says, very rightly : “The Muslims appear to lack direction.” His first attempt, he told the Press Club, “would be to pull them out of their dispondency, to make them look beyond their shell....” He is also reported to have told the Press Club that the Muslim League in India did not help the community. “It only revived old wounds.” How very true. Most Muslims that I have talked to have said that the Muslim League it is that has led them into the present morass. They want fresh direction, a new and healthy leadership.

Soon after the meeting with the Press Club that I have mentioned above, Sheikh Abdullah is reported to have given a fairly long interview to the *UNI*, which, *inter alia*, was carried by the *Times of India* of August 31, under the headline “Indian Muslims Must Come Out Of Their Shells : Abdullah”, under a Srinagar dateline of August 30. This merits more publicity than it has received.

Sheikh Abdullah told the UNI that the creation of initial confidence between the Muslims and their "elder brothers", the Hindus, was his current national mission. He said that it would not be good for the Muslims, who constituted a significant minority, and it would not be good for the country, either, if they (the Muslims) were "driven to despair".

May I quote more from the *Times* ?

Outlining the factors which led him to set his sights on wider horizons, as he recently put it, the Sheikh told the UNI that Indian Muslims had been living in an imaginary pre-partition India.

They had not adjusted themselves to the situation arising from the departure of the British. Instead they tended to withdraw into a shell, he said. He wanted to help them to find a niche for themselves in the mainstream of national life.

The Sheikh said that the Muslims had genuine grievances and his effort was to make them see their problems in the socio-economic context instead of a religious or sectarian one. That was why he had been drawing their attention to problems of other sections, notably the Harijans whose disabilities were no less than theirs.

He believed that the opposition to his mission could only come from the communalists of all shades who have a common interest in perpetuating the atmosphere of distrust... He made it clear that he had no intention of creating a common front of Muslims, Harijans and other groups which are victims of oppression. 'I am operating on a higher wavelength. So some people may have difficulty in understanding my mission', he remarked...

Sporadic discussions, I would conclude, in the National Integration Council or elsewhere, on the grievances and the disabilities of the minorities are not the answer. These certainly have not produced the results that we hoped for, not in twenty-five years. There is a gaping hole, a veritable crater, in the body-politic of the Muslim community, and somebody has to step into the hole and get the Muslims of India to "see their problems in the socio-economic context" and get them out of the narrow religious and sectarian spirals.

In regard to Kashmir, I said "Indira can do it". Here I say, "the Sheikh can do it".

It is time he came out of the Kashmiri egg-shell—to wider horizons in this vast country.